

**AN EXPLORATION OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT  
BETWEEN CLIENT AND CONSULTANT**

by

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I, **Yolandi Havemann**, declare that **“An Exploration of the Psychological Contract between Client and Consultant”** is my own work. All the resources I used for this study are cited and referred to in the reference list by means of a comprehensive referencing system.

I declare that the content of this thesis has never before been used for any qualification at any tertiary institute.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Yolandi Havemann

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **AN EXPLORATION OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT BETWEEN CLIENT AND CONSULTANT**

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Since the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the consulting industry has grown significantly. Today, consulting is a widespread, one-size-fits-all term that includes virtually any form of advice-giving in a business setting. Irrespective of the industry, there is a large market and high demand for consulting. Knowing how to engage clients and ensuring successful consulting has never been more critical for consultancies looking to capitalise on scarce client demand. The purpose of this research study was to gain a collective understanding of those aspects that constitute successful consulting, focusing on the implicit dimensions that influence client-consultant engagement. In this regard, the research study aimed to add value by presenting a new perspective on, and extend understanding of the implicit dimensions influencing the client-consultant relationship by focusing on both clients and consultants through the unique lens of the Psychological Contract. This exploration of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant was conducted through the interpretivist paradigm, or to be more specific, a social constructivist approach. This approach allowed the researcher to explore the Psychological Contract between client and consultant through the constructed meanings that both clients and consultants attach to their experience of the client-consultant relationship, and enabled the researcher to explore their perceptions and interpretations of the dimensions that influenced that relationship. The researcher furthermore applied a qualitative research design and constructivist grounded theory method to explore the subjective meanings of clients and consultants, and to discover their reality. This design and method generated rich, in-depth data and understanding of the participants' beliefs, perceptions, and subjective experiences to develop a

comprehensive framework of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant.

#### KEY TERMS

Psychological Contract, client-consultant relationship, unwritten dimensions, underlying dimensions, unconscious processes, social constructivist approach, qualitative research, constructivist grounded theory.

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## CHAPTER 1

“In every society some men are born to rule, and some to advise”

– *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

### ORIENTATION AND BACKGROUND

This research focuses on the dimensions that influence the client-consultant relationship beyond the boundaries of the explicit contractual agreement, therefore the psychological contractual aspects required to effectively manage this relationship in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

This chapter provides a scientific background to the research, highlights the purpose of the research study, and discusses the problem statement, the overall aim, the research goals, and the outline of the chapters in this study.

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Since the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the consulting industry has grown significantly. During the economic downturn in 2000, it slowed down somewhat up to 2003, but has since been experiencing slowly increasing growth ever since, remaining highly cyclical and linked to overall economic conditions (Berridge & Kirven, 2008:79). In 2007, the global market for management consulting was estimated to exceed the \$210 billion mark, and a total figure of \$300 billion was reported in 2008 (Gross & Poor, 2008:62; Kennedy’s Global Consulting Marketplace Report 2009-2012).

Beyond identifying historical growth, it is important to briefly probe the driving forces that gave rise to such growth in revenue for the industry. These revenues increased from about \$1 billion in 1995 to over \$150 billion worldwide by 2005, and then doubled to \$300 billion in 2008. Gross and Poor (2008:60-61) explored these factors and traced the origin of consulting back to the end of the nineteenth century,

emphasising its “coming of age” in the mid twentieth century following the spread of corporate ideology to non-corporate sectors: the organisation for the World War II effort, the increasing complexity of companies, and the growing impact of business education.

Today, consulting is a widespread, one-size-fits-all term that includes virtually any form of advice-giving in a business setting. The consulting industry can be divided into the following broad areas:

- *Strategy consulting*, which focuses on identifying the direction, goals, and growth of an organisation within a specific industry;
- *Information Technology (IT) consulting*, which focuses on using technology to help organisations become more efficient and productive in achieving its goals;
- *Industry-specific consulting*, where the focus is on a specific industry, which can include strategy, management, IT, scientific, or technical consulting; and
- *Management consulting*, where the focus is on how an organisation functions to achieve its stated goals. In general, this includes strategy, operations, human resources, and information technology, as illustrated in the figure below:

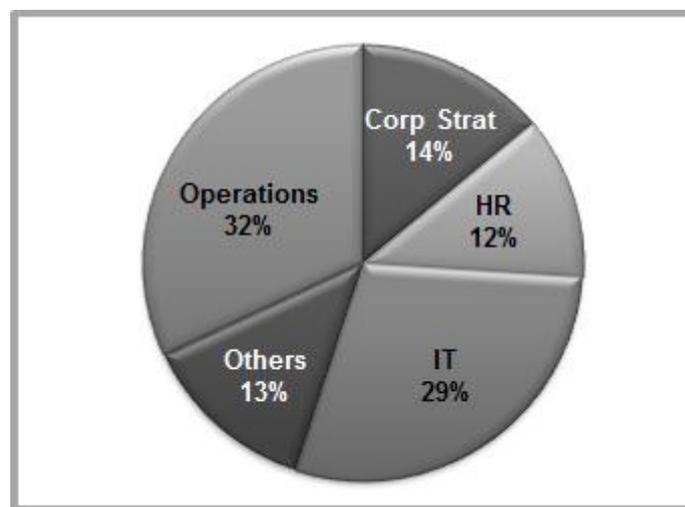


Figure 1: Global Management Consulting Sector – Major Service Offerings

(Biswas & Twitchell, 1997:11; Gross & Poor, 2008:62)

Irrespective of the industry, there is a large market and high demand for any type of consulting. In research conducted by Blunsdon (2002), the market drivers for

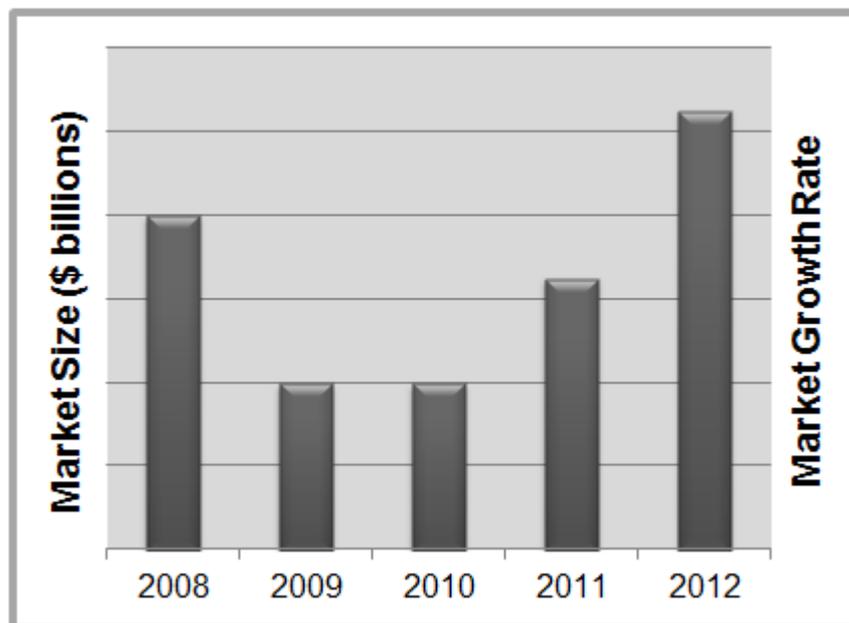
consultants were explored in order to outline a framework within which to understand the structure of this market. The following aspects were identified as contributors to the existence of a consulting market:

- *Persistent organisational problems* – variable problems that create an atmosphere of uncertainty, risk, and vulnerability, particularly in the context of a dynamic and ever changing global environment;
- *Scarcity* – resource limitations with the associated problems of scarcity and the demand for organisational inputs such as labour, technology, assets, know-how, and information;
- *Uncertainty* – ambiguity imposed by internal organisational and external environmental change resulting in information and skills requirements to make decisions and execute plans, strategies, and operations;
- *Conflict* – recurring problems of conflict, tensions resulting from the divergent interests of employees and management, stakeholders, and other special interest groups; and
- *Instability* – external pressures shifting the organisation’s focus internally toward organisational attributes such as its values, beliefs, and culture in order to regulate the organisation without having to enforce standardised rules, procedures, and policies.

As such, consultants are called into organisations to create rational, progressive solutions to address organisational problems, to explore opportunities, and to bring innovations to management practices, to build capacity in clients, to solve recurring problems of scarcity, uncertainty, conflict, and instability, and to manage and sustain growth, thereby maximising revenue (Ajmal, Nordström & Helo, 2009:525-527; Blunsdon, 2002).

Considering the current global economical conditions, the rate of organisational change, and the competitive advantage that information, knowledge, and expertise can provide, consulting is here to stay. What the consulting industry will look like in future, no one is able to predict, but it is important to probe the future state of client demand and forecast future growth in order to explore the nature of client-consultant relationships in years to come.

Kennedy's Global Consulting Marketplace Report (Open Text Corporation, n.d.) points out that the characteristics of consulting demands have irreversibly changed, and that it is highly unlikely that the double-digit growth experienced in the past three decades will continue. The report reveals that, although the global consulting market will rebound in 2011, it will not return to 2008 levels until 2012, as illustrated in Figure 2 below:



*Figure 2: Global Consulting Market Size and Growth, 2008 to 2012*  
(Open Text Corporation, n.d.)

Kennedy analysts furthermore emphasise that what few demand drivers there are will serve to sustain rather than materially grow the overall consulting market (Open Text Corporation, n.d.). Knowing how to engage clients and ensuring successful consulting has never been more critical for consultancies looking to capitalise on scarce client demand.

This brings up a critical question: What is the “know-how” that constitutes successful consulting?

## 1.2 WHAT CONSTITUTES SUCCESSFUL CLIENT-CONSULTANT ENGAGEMENT?

Before going into the review of what constitutes successful client-consultant engagement, it is important to clarify the meaning of both *client* and *consultant* for the purposes of this research study.

As mentioned in section 1.1, Biswas and Twitchell (1997:11) stated that consulting is a big, widespread, one-size-fits-all term that includes virtually any form of advice-giving in a business setting. Biech (2007:2), in her book, “*The Business of Consulting: The Basics and Beyond*,” posits that consulting is “the process by which an individual or firm assists a client to achieve a stated outcome.” For the purposes of this research, the researcher will adopt this rather generic view of consulting and will not differentiate between types of consulting, types of consultants, or types of client organisations.

The premise throughout this research study is that the consultant is an experienced professional who diagnoses organisational problems and/or provides expert advice or services necessary to achieve a client’s desired outcome, and the client is the organisation, or a specific individual representing the organisation, requesting information or advice in exchange for an agreed-upon form of compensation (adopted from definitions in Beich, 2007:2; Bullen, 2003:7 and Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 2008).

In an attempt to determine what constitutes successful client-consultant engagement, several authors stated that the success of consultants is significantly influenced by the effectiveness of their consulting relationships with clients (Appelbaum & Steed, 2005:69; Neumann, Kellner & Dawson-Shepherd, 1997). Most commonly, these relationships with clients are governed by contractual agreements specifying the scope and objectives, stipulating sanctions for non-conformance, providing the context in which the relationship exists, and shaping the terms of exchange (Appelbaum & Steed, 2005:72; Kadefors, 2004:176). In research conducted by Soon Ang and Straub (2004:358), however, they found that relying solely on the written legal contract between client and consultant to ensure

successful engagement is not sufficient. They go further by explaining that the complexities of real-life consulting arrangements and the rapid changes in technology and organisational environments necessitate a focus on the unwritten promises and interpretation of obligations between client and consultant in addition to the existence of a contractual agreement.

Appelbaum and Steed (2005:75) agree with this in finding and stated that research on the success factors in the client-consultant relationship often focuses on the “hard” criteria and deliverables stipulated in the service level agreement, or on comparisons between techniques used, rather than the actual behaviours and interpretation of these behaviours exhibited by consultants within successful client-consultant relationships. Martin, Horne, and Chan (2001:144) also found that over-emphasis on project management and legal contracting often led to gaps in expectations of clients and consultants, and that the focus should in fact be on matching these expectations to ensure successful engagement, productivity, and satisfaction. Another concept, rarely taken into consideration in research on client-consultant engagement, is the unconscious processes at work in the consulting relationship, and how these influence the effectiveness of that relationship (Bullen, 2003:8).

As such, research related to the factors that enable effective client-consultant engagement focused largely on tangible, contractual factors such as compliance with the deliverables and specifications stipulated in service level agreements. It did not take into account other factors such as delivering on unwritten promises, assumptions and expectations, client-consultant behaviour, and managing the unconscious processes at work in the consulting relationship - factors that will greatly influence the effectiveness of the consulting relationship, constituting successful engagement, productivity, and satisfaction.

### 1.3 THE NEED FOR FURTHER EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON CLIENT-CONSULTANT ENGAGEMENT

As mentioned above, there is a great need to explore the factors that facilitate successful client-consulting engagement beyond the boundaries of the contractual agreement that governs the relationship between these two parties.

To take it a step further, not only has previous research on the effectiveness of the client-consultant relationship focused mostly on tangible, contractual factors, but it has also done so mainly from a client perspective (Appelbaum & Steed, 2005:70-73). Research that incorporates both client and consultant perspectives remains comparatively rare even though effective consulting involves actions and commitment from both sides of the relationship (Soon Ang & Straub, 2004:357). As such, to truly understand what constitutes successful client-consultant engagement, one needs to consider both the client and consultant, as they both contribute to, engage in, and behave in a certain manner within the client-consultant relationship.

Lastly, more recent research, such as that of Ajmal, Nordström, and Helo (2009), in which they assessed the effectiveness of business consulting, concluded that there is a great need for empirical research aimed at identifying the success factors in consulting projects to better manage the client-consultant relationship in future (Ajmal et al., 2009:539). Berridge and Kirven (2008), in their book, *“Iterate Or Die: Agile Consulting for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Business Success,”* also emphasised the fact that the world of consulting as we know it has changed significantly, and that consultants today are very different from those who came into consulting as recently as the late 1990’s. What constituted successful consulting in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century is not applicable today. How the client-consultant relationship was managed should be reviewed and adapted, and a new framework for consulting in this on-demand era should be established (Berridge & Kirven, 2008:88-95).

To conclude, there is a great need for further empirical research on client-consultant engagement. The main issues are: (1) there is a gap in previous research related to the factors that enable effective client-consultant engagement, (2) there is a gap in previous research that takes both the client’s and the consultant’s perspectives into

account when evaluating client-consultant relationships, and (3) there is a gap in the current research related to what constitutes successful consulting for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

#### **1.4 THE PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to gain a collective understanding of those aspects that constitute successful consulting, focusing on the implicit dimensions of effective client-consultant engagement in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

It is proposed that an explorative study be done from both a client and consultant perspective on those dimensions influencing the client-consultant relationship that are not incorporated in contractual agreements, but that are implicit and impact profoundly on the productivity, effectiveness, and outcome of that relationship.

#### **1.5 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Corporate spending on consultants has been criticised for at least two decades, reflecting a long-standing mistrust and doubt regarding the usefulness of business consultants in general (Ajmal et al., 2009:524). Alongside the doubt regarding the value add of consultants, global expenditure on consulting services has been cut back in light of the current economic conditions, with an inordinately low consulting demand threatening the industry, as reported in Kennedy's Global Consulting Marketplace Report 2009-2012. These circumstances necessitate taking a step back and determining the dimensions that impact the client-consultant relationship beyond the scope, objectives, and terms of exchange incorporated in the contractual agreement. It also requires a probe into what will be expected from the consultant in future to ensure that the client-consultant relationship will be managed effectively in order for the industry to grow and remain sustainable.

Current research, however, does not provide sufficient information on the aspects constituting successful client-consultant engagement, as can be seen from the gaps

identified in section 1.3. It offers a critique and then makes recommendations regarding dimensions to consider (i.e. interpretations of behaviour, expectations, and unconscious processes) that go beyond adherence to contractual agreements, but does not clarify or explain how these dimensions relate to each other as they occur in the client-consultant relationship.

Other researchers, such as Appelbaum and Steed (2005), Martin et al (2001), and Neumann (1997) emphasise the importance of how the consultant puts together the consulting process, and offers information on consulting cycles and stages, but focus, yet again, on the contractual and tangible aspects that should be in place, such as the service level agreement, goals and objectives, specified deliverables, and documentation on the roles and responsibilities. Martin et al. (2001:144), for example, do note that the “joining together” of clients and consultants in a productive relationship requires “internal commitment” and “a spirit of team play,” which can be significantly influenced by the expectations between the two parties. Appelbaum and Steed (2005:77) mention that “clear and well communicated expectations” will lead to more favourable outcomes, Soon Ang and Straub (2004) report that the way clients and consultants interpret and understand their mutual obligations can influence success, and Bullen (2003:8), as another example, states that consultants need to gain an understanding of the unconscious processes that are at work in the consulting relationship. However, how these dimensions fit together, relate to each other, and should to be managed within the client-consultant relationship, remains yet to be explored.

In an attempt to close the existing gap in research on client-consultant engagement, this research study will explore implicit dimensions influencing the client-consultant relationship that are not incorporated in contractual agreements, from both a client and consultant perspective, and determine how they fit together and relate to one another. As such, the aim with this study is to add value by providing a framework of the implicit dimensions at play in the client-consultant relationship, with the view that this framework will assist consultants to identify and interpret these implicit dimensions, understand how it impact their relationship with their clients, and that it will enable them to effectively manage the client-consultant relationship in future.

This will be achieved through the utilisation of the concept of the Psychological Contract as a foundation to explore the dimensions impacting the client-consultant relationship. The Psychological Contract is an exchange concept (emphasising the collaboration of two parties) that provides a broad explanatory framework for understanding organisational relationships (McFarlane Shore & Tetrick, 1994:91). It was firmly established as an empirical construct in the 1990's by Denise Rousseau, driven by the desire to identify new and more innovative ways to better manage people in the organisational context (Kickul, Lester & Belgio, 2004:230; Cullinane & Dundon, 2006:114).

The majority of the research in the area of Psychological Contracts has been conducted using full-time employees involved in a continuous relationship with their employers (Parks, Kidder & Gallagher, 1998:697). Literature pertaining to the client-consultant Psychological Contract is far less extensive (Bullen, 2003:45), but, as Rousseau firmly states, the two parties to the Psychological Contract could in fact be "a client, customer, supplier, or any other interdependent party" (Rousseau, 1995:34).

Although scarce, research on the Psychological Contracting between client and consultant proved to be valuable. Martin et al (2001:144), for example, found that it is the Psychological Contract between client and consultant that drives expectations and governs the corresponding gaps between the parties. Soon Ang and Straub (2004:357) also found that the Psychological Contract theory provides a highly relevant and sound theoretical lens for studying "outsourcing" relationships because it offers a focus on mutual rather than one-sided obligations between contractual parties, and emphasises psychological, as distinct from legal, obligations. It is indeed the evolving nature of the Psychological Contract that enables the application thereof to capture the complexity of the client-consultant relationship (Parks et al, 1998:726), and it is in itself an important phenomenon to acknowledge in terms of both theory and future research (Cullinane & Dundon, 2006:125).

Thus, for the purposes of this research study, the researcher will adopt Rousseau's view of a Psychological Contract, and apply it to the client-consultant relationship, defining it as the client and consultant's mental beliefs and expectations about their

mutual obligations in a contractual relationship, based on the perceptions of both parties of the terms of a reciprocal exchange (Rousseau, 1990:390; Rousseau 1995:9).

An in-depth discussion on the Psychological Contract and its application in the client-consultant relationship will follow in Chapter 2 of this research study.

Other theoretical perspectives used in this research include the Psychodynamic Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and Systems Theory as applied and researched in organisational thinking. Specifically, the use psychodynamic theory will be utilised to explore the underlying unconscious processes at work within and between the client and consultant in order to effectively position and conceptualise the Psychological Contract within the client-consultant relationship. Although limited, there is great significance to the literature conducted on the psychodynamic theory in the client-consultant context, and the research findings of Bullen (2003), Czander and Eisold (2003), Diamond and Allcorn (2003), Neumann et al (1997), Ringer (2002), and Sher (2002) will be explored in Chapter 2 of this research study.

## **1.6 RESEARCH QUESTION**

This is an explorative study that aims to provide a framework of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant by illustrating the implicit dimensions influencing the client-consultant relationship, and indicating how they fit together and relate to one another. Thus, the research questions for this study are:

- What are the implicit dimensions (those aspects that fall beyond the boundaries of the contractual agreement) influencing the client-consultant relationship from both the client's and consultant's perspective?
- How do these implicit dimensions fit together and relate to one another in order to create a framework of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant?

## 1.7 RESEARCH GOALS AND CHAPTER OUTLINE

The aim of this research study is to present a new perspective and extend understanding of the implicit dimensions influencing the client-consultant relationship by focusing on both clients and consultants through the unique lens of the Psychological Contract. In achieving this aim, it is important to address the following:

- Understand the concept of the Psychological Contract as it emerged in the employer-employee relationship;
- Identify and categorise the implicit dimensions related to the Psychological Contract;
- Position the Psychological Contract within the client-consultant relationship;
- Conceptualise the Psychological Contract within the client-consultant relationship;
- Explore the implicit dimensions impacting the client-consultant relationship that are not incorporated in contractual agreements;
- Model the implicit dimensions influencing the client-consultant relationship and indicate how they fit together and relate to one another as a framework of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant;
- Outline the research design and method to effectively explore the Psychological Contract between client and consultant; and
- Ensure that the research is valid and reliable.

All these points are explained and dealt with in the remaining chapters of this document. The following chapter outline was followed:

- *Chapter 2:* This chapter offers an in-depth review of existing literature on the Psychological Contract as it emerged within the employer-employee relationship, and identifies and categorises the implicit dimensions related to the Psychological Contract between employer and employee. The chapter then further explores and positions the Psychological Contract within the client-consultant relationship through an extensive review of literature related to client-consultant engagement. It also establishes a clear link between the Psychological Contract and the unconscious processes that govern the “perceptual systems,” influence the beliefs

and expectations, and affect the behaviours of clients and consultants within the client-consultant relationship. Chapter 2 concludes with a theoretical framework as a basis to explore the implicit dynamics that influence the client-consultant relationship, focusing on both the client and the consultant through the unique lens of the Psychological Contract.

- *Chapter 3:* Chapter 3 addresses the research paradigm or approach, research design, and research methods followed during the research study, chosen based on the (1) research questions, research aim and research goals, (2) the nature of the phenomenon to explore, and (3) the ontological and epistemological positions that underpin the researcher's beliefs related to this research. It positions the interpretivist paradigm, or, to be more specific, social constructivist approach, as the most appropriate approach for the study, as it will allow the exploration of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant through the constructed meanings that both clients and consultants attach to their experience of the client-consultant relationship, and enable the researcher to explore their perceptions and interpretations of the dimensions that influence that relationship. Chapter 3 also outlines the qualitative research design and constructivist grounded theory method as the most appropriate means to explore the subjective meanings of *client* and *consultant*, and aims to discover their reality by generating rich, in-depth data and understanding on their beliefs, perceptions, and subjective experiences. The specific constructivist grounded theory methods and techniques followed in the research are also discussed. These include: (1) the use of non-probability, purposive sampling for initial data collection, and theoretical sampling for subsequent data collection, (2) the choice of target population and unit of analysis (research participants), (3) data collection procedures, including short reflective narratives and semi-structured interviews, (4) data storage and management through the use of Atlas.ti, (5) data analysis using the constructivist approach to grounded theory as method to analyse data, and also to incorporate, as a point of departure, Nygren and Blom's (2001:374) concept of naïve reading as applied in narrative analysis, and, lastly, (6) the use of memo-writing as a reflective tool to record the researcher's ontological and epistemological assumptions, overall subjective experience, interpretation, and thinking about the research, which

was incorporated during data analysis and theoretical sorting and interpretation. Motivation for the use of each of these methods and techniques is also provided in detail. Lastly, Chapter 3 also provides information on the quality of the research as well as the ethical considerations upheld throughout the research.

- *Chapter 4:* This chapter provides information on aspects that impacted the research related to the research participants, as well as the researcher's ontological and epistemological assumptions, subjective perceptions and interpretations, and overall thinking about the research. It also provides a detailed discussion of the analysis of the data, and illustrates the themes and conceptual categories that emerged from the data collected and analysed. The different themes and conceptual categories are discussed in this Chapter to ensure that the reader understands the findings that emerged from the data.
- *Chapter 5:* Chapter 5 provides the results of the research. The literature and findings were integrated to form a comprehensive framework of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant, illustrating the implicit dimensions influencing the client-consultant relationship and indicating how they fit together and relate to one another. The chapter concludes with the limitations and implications of the research study as well as recommendations for further studies.

## **1.8 CHAPTER CONCLUSION**

This chapter provides an overview of the consulting industry and established a need for further empirical research required for this industry to become sustainable in years to come. This chapter also stresses the gaps in current knowledge on the success factors pertaining to client-consultant engagement and discusses the need for a more focused approach to managing the client-consultant relationship. A problem statement and general introduction to the Psychological Contract and other theoretical perspectives used in this research study are given. This chapter concludes with the specific research questions, research aim, research goals, and a brief overview of the remaining chapters of this research study.

## CHAPTER 2

### **THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT APPLIED TO THE CLIENT-CONSULTANT RELATIONSHIP**

This chapter offers a broad overview of the existing literature on the Psychological Contract. This includes a review of the Psychological Contract as it evolved within the employer-employee relationship, the dimensions related to the Psychological Contract, as well as existing literature on the Psychological Contract as applied within the client-consultant relationship. It also explores other dimensions influencing the client-consultant relationship, and relates it to those dimensions already identified as part of the Psychological Contract within the client-consultant relationship.

The aim of this chapter is to conceptualise the Psychological Contract within the client-consultant relationship by indicating how the dimensions that influence this relationship fit together and relate to one another. This conceptualisation will then serve as a framework with which to explore the concept of the Psychological Contract within the client-consultant relationship through the field research carried out in this research project.

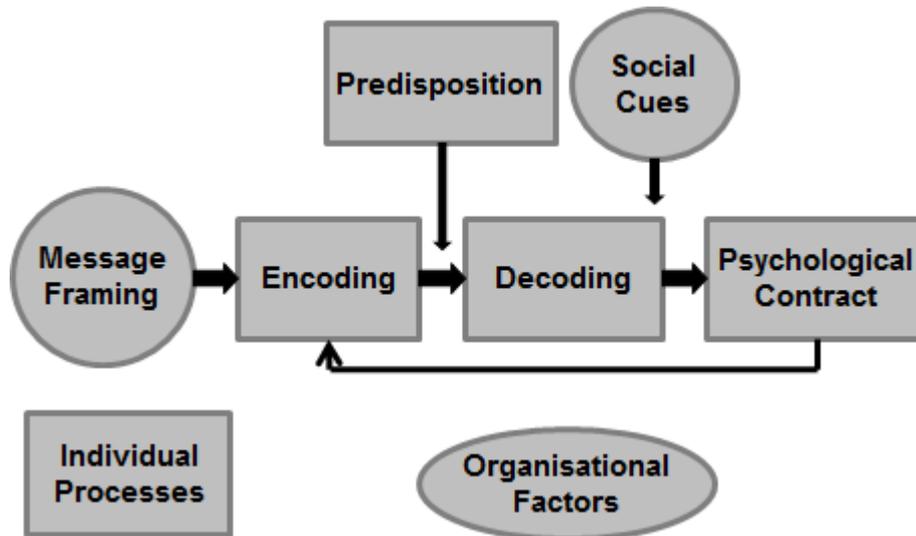
#### **2.1 FOUNDING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT WITHIN THE EMPLOYER-EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIP**

Contracts are the basis of employment relations. Employment contracts, however, not only refer to the formal, written contracts between various parties to employment, but also to the perceptual, unwritten contracts containing mutual expectations and subjective beliefs regarding obligations and entitlements stipulated in the employment contract (Gullinane & Dundon, 2006:113; Kickkul, Lester & Belgio, 2004:320; Rousseau, 1990:389). These perceptual, unwritten contracts are commonly referred to as Psychological Contracts.

The concept *Psychological Contract* had its origins in the social exchange theory, with the earliest references beginning with the research of Chris Argyris in 1960 (Cullinane & Dundon, 2006:114). Argyris used it as a framework to describe the exchange relationship between employer and employee (Sels, Janssens & Van den Brande, 2004:462). Denise Rousseau firmly established the concept of the Psychological Contract as an empirical construct, which has attracted much research interest since the 1990's (Soon Ang & Straub, 2004:357). Interest in the Psychological Contract at this time was driven by a desire to identify better ways to manage people amidst a context of economic restructuring, growing international competition, and changing labour market dynamics (Kickul, Lester & Belgio, 2004:230; Cullinane & Dundon, 2006:114).

In this context, Rousseau emphasised individual employee subjectivity in employment by creating an awareness of the individual employees' sense of obligation and the need to understand the reciprocal expectations held by employees and employers concerning their responsibilities and entitlements (Cullinane & Dundon, 2006:116; Parks et al., 1998:698). According to Rousseau (1995:9), psychological contracts "are individual beliefs, shaped by the organisation, regarding terms of an exchange agreement between individuals and their organisations." She goes further by explaining that these beliefs become contractual when the individual believes that certain inducements on the part of the employer are contingent on some reciprocal contributions by the employee (Rousseau, 1990:390).

By emphasising this reciprocal relationship, Rousseau (1995:18-30) stresses the fact that there are always two parties to the creation of a Psychological Contract, and that there is, as such, a series of organisational (i.e. policies, procedures, culture etc.) and individual (i.e. frame of reference, mental models etc.) processes that underlie the creation of the Psychological Contract.



*Figure 3: Creating an Individual's Psychological Contract*  
 (Rousseau, 1995:33)

Figure 3 presents a diagram of the process through which the Psychological Contract is created. Apart from the organisational and individual processes that affect the creation of the Psychological Contract, there are two sets of factors that operate in forming the Psychological Contract. First are the external messages (i.e. the organisation's intentions for the future), which signals commitments. Second are the Social Cues, acquired from colleagues or work groups, which shape how the individual will interpret the organisation's actions and sculpt beliefs and impressions about the workplace (Rousseau, 1995:34). Once these messages and cues have been received by the individual, it is interpreted through encoding. The individual's predisposition, however, affects how the encoded information is filtered, interpreted, used, and recalled over time. Two important individual predispositions are cognitive biases (i.e. views of the self, perceptions of control) and motives (i.e. what they stand to gain, what they are entitled to), which are person specific (Rousseau, 1995:43-44). Finally, the Psychological Contract is created through decoding that reflects the judgements individuals make regarding the standards of behaviour related to the reciprocal promises and obligations implied in the employment relationship (Guest & Conway, 2002:22; Rousseau, 1995:44-46).

*Why is it so important to understand the concept of the Psychological Contract?*

As Rousseau (1995:27-30) stated, the Psychological Contract serves as a “Mental Model” that people use to frame events that occur within the employment relationship. It cues people as to what events they should expect, and how they should interpret them, ultimately determining the meaning they create from these events. As such, the Psychological Contract fundamentally drives expectations of employers and employees, and determines the nature of the employment relationship itself. If one wants to explore this relationship, it is important to understand the concept of the Psychological Contract and be able to identify dimensions pertaining to the Psychological Contract as it impacts and influences the relationship between employer and employee.

### **2.1.1 DIMENSIONS RELATED TO THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT BETWEEN EMPLOYER AND EMPLOYEE**

From the above, it is clear that the Psychological Contract is a complex yet significant concept to consider in the research of organisational and workplace behaviour.

Since the 1990's, theoretical and empirical research on the Psychological Contract has taken several different paths. Researchers have examined the process through which psychological contracts are formed, exploring the forces that promote mutuality and agreement (e.g., Parks et al., 1998; Patterson, 2001; Rousseau, 1995), other researchers have studied the management of the psychological contract, and, in particular, the relationship between psychological contract fulfilment and employee behaviour (Guest & Conway, 2002; Turnley, Bolino, Lester & Bloodgood, 2003), while still other researchers have focused on the violation or breach of the psychological contract and the implications thereof (Deery, Iverson & Walsh, 2006; Kickul, Lester & Belgio, 2004).

For the purpose of this research project, it is important to consult previous research conducted on the Psychological Contract in order to identify dimensions to use as a basis for the exploration to the Psychological Contract between client and consultant. Even though the aforementioned studies focused on different elements related to the

Psychological Contract and focused primarily on the Psychological Contract between employer and employee, it provides a depth of information from which it is possible to identify specific aspects and dimensions to be used in this research project.

Referring back to Figure 3 and the explanation of the creation of the Psychological Contract, what stands out most is the fact that the Psychological Contract is “person specific” and influenced by “individual predispositions” (Rousseau, 1995:43). Even though the creation of the Psychological Contract is based on certain organisational factors (contracts and social cues) and somewhat generic individual processes (encoding and decoding), the nature of the Psychological Contract is based on individual perception and subjective interpretation, and exists in the “eye of the beholder.” This brings us to the first concept related to the Psychological Contract as identified from previous research:

#### 2.1.1.1 Unwritten dimensions related to the Psychological Contract between employer and employee

As an individual-level phenomenon, the Psychological Contract is based on the individual’s beliefs and perceptions about both the written, explicit terms incorporated into a legal contract and the implicit promises made by the organisation to the employee. Ultimately, it is the individuals’ beliefs and perceptions that drive their behaviour, as, regardless of whether a formalised contract exists, it is how people interpret this contract, as well as the informal organisational cues, that will be guiding individual actions (McFarlane Shore & Tetrick, 1994:92; Rousseau, 1995:112).

A key feature of the Psychological Contract is that the individual voluntarily accepts to undertake certain actions, based on his or her perceived role definition (Rousseau, 1995:10). Perceived role definition will determine the employee’s willingness to assume certain roles and responsibilities and to accept accountability for work deliverables (Rousseau, 1990:390). It is what the individual believes he or she has agreed to that makes the contract; the image, or the idea created by interpreting what their role means that will determine their behaviour (Rousseau, 1995:18-19). As such, the first unwritten dimension related to the Psychological Contract can be identified as “perceived role definition.”

The second unwritten dimension pertaining to the Psychological Contract is the belief of reciprocal mutuality. According to Turnley, Bolino, Lester, and Bloodgood (2003:190), employment relationships are made up of actions grounded in the belief that one party will reciprocate the behaviours of the other in one way or another. It is about the individual employee's understanding of explicit and implicit promises regarding organisational inducements such as pay, promotions etc. (Cullinane & Dundon, 2006:116). Perceived promises of a reciprocal exchange result in a sense of obligation within the employee, who believes that considerations will only be offered in exchange for effort, good performance, etc. as promised and agreed to by the employee (Rousseau, 1995:6-10).

The first two dimensions, "perceived role definition" and "belief of reciprocal mutuality," lead to the third unwritten dimension related to the Psychological Contract, identified as unwritten expectations. As Rousseau (1995:9) explains, perceived role definition and belief in mutual obligations between two or more parties fundamentally drive expectations between the parties to the relationship. These expectations evolve over time and continue to act as a boundary guiding individual actions and behaviours within the employment relationship (McFarlane Shore & Tetrick, 1994:96).

To conclude, unwritten dimensions pertaining to the Psychological Contract are those aspects that result from individual perception and subjective interpretation of both the explicit written terms found in the legal contract and implicit actions of the organisation. From the literature it is possible to identify three major unwritten dimensions, as summarised in the figure below:

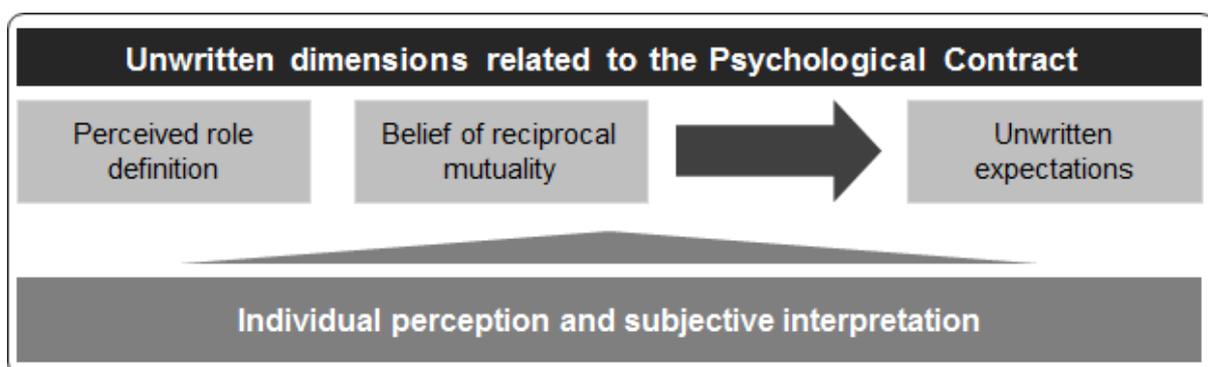


Figure 4: Unwritten dimensions related to the Psychological Contract

### 2.1.1.2 Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract between employer and employee

The second concept related to the Psychological Contract refers to those underlying psychological dimensions that greatly influence social behaviour in general. Social behaviour also occurs in work settings between persons who work together in an organisation (Baron & Byrne, 2000:563), and it is therefore important to identify these underlying psychological dimensions in order to understand the impact thereof on the employment relationship.

To illustrate this point, Baron and Byrne (2000:564) refer to a term called “organisational citizenship behaviour,” i.e. helping others, collaboration, going beyond the minimum requirements of a job etc. to describe prosocial behaviour in the workplace. This type of behaviour is performed voluntarily by the individual, and is based upon an expectation that it will produce a beneficial effect whether it is being rewarded by the organisation, being recognised by others, or satisfying an intrapersonal or psychological need (Baron & Byrne, 2000:546-547). Organisational citizenship behaviour is furthermore dependent on the individual’s sense of self and perception of control, as well as positive interpretations of the intentions or behaviour of others within the employment relationship (Kadefors, 2004:176; Rousseau, 1995:43-44; Sels, Janssens & Van den Brande, 2004:472). As such, it is clear that the nature of employment relationships is not just driven by a formal employment contracts and subjective interpretations, but that there are several underlying psychological dimensions at play.

The first underlying dimension related to the Psychological Contract is trust. Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, and Camerer (1998:395) explain that trust is a psychological state, not a behaviour. It is comprised of the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive interpretations of the motives of others, and the belief that the individual will be treated fairly within the employment relationship (Baron & Byrne, 2000:564; Rousseau et al. 1998:396). Although the development of trust is beyond the scope of this study, it is worth mentioning that Rousseau (1995:20) and Turnley et al. (2003:190) relate the formation of trust to the concept of mutuality and the expectation of reciprocation.

If trust is present, people can spontaneously engage in constructive interaction, share information, and make decisions without pondering who is formally responsible for problems and who is going to be held accountable. Trust is vital for bringing about farther-reaching cooperative processes, and the more interdependency there is between individuals, the more trust is required to achieve a productive working relationship (Kadefors, 2004:176). Being a psychological state, trust greatly influences the relationship between employer and employee.

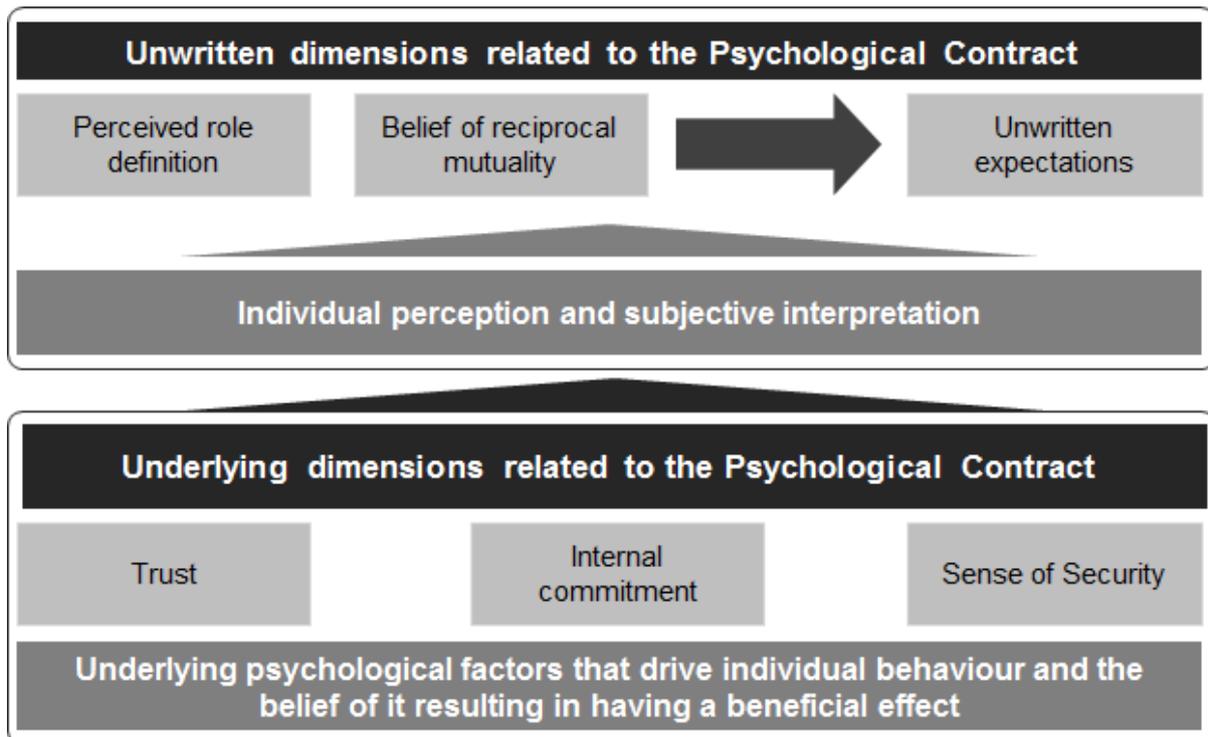
The second underlying dimension influencing the Psychological Contract is internal commitment. A study conducted by Sels et al. (2004:484) indicated a strong relationship between the concept of the Psychological Contract and internal commitment, in that internal commitment was related to long-term mutual obligations and even an employee accepting an unequal employment relationship. Internal commitment refers to the degree to which employees feel emotionally attached to the organisation, and governs the productivity of the employee in the employment relationship (Sels et al., 2004:472).

The willingness to commit is key to creating a viable Psychological Contract, as it signals acceptance of the role and responsibilities that the individual will take on within the employment relationship. It fosters a spirit of team play and collaboration, and emphasises the belief in mutuality (Rousseau, 1995:9, 20-21).

The first two underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract, trust and internal commitment, are related to the nature of the Psychological Contract. According to Rousseau's definition, "Psychological Contracts are individual beliefs, shaped by the organisation, regarding terms of an exchange agreement between individuals and their organisations" (Rousseau, 1995:9). As such, trust and internal commitment relate to "what" the individual believes regarding the terms of an exchange agreement. The third underlying dimension related to the Psychological Contract is "why" the individual develops specific beliefs regarding an exchange agreement.

Individuals will develop Psychological Contracts regardless of whether a formalised contract exists or not (Rousseau, 1995). Even though many employment contracts are quite comprehensive, it is not possible to document all aspects of employment (McFarlane Shore & Tetrick, 1994:93). Individuals will develop a Psychological Contract to support the perception of the terms of the contract that are unambiguously defined, explicitly specified, and agreed upon by both parties (Sels et al., 2004:466). Thus, Psychological Contracts reduce individual uncertainty by establishing agreed-upon conditions of employment. That is, employees have a greater sense of security and feeling of comfortableness by believing that they have a clear agreement with their employer (McFarlane Shore & Tetrick, 1994:93). The perception of an empowered and explicit employment relationship will increase feelings of predictability and personal control, and create organisation-employee bonding (McFarlane Shore & Tetrick, 1994:94; Sels et al., 2004:474-482). As such, the third underlying dimension related to the Psychological Contract is “sense of security,” which refers to the perception of control that individuals believe they have over their environment, whether direct or indirect, to reduce uncertainty and make it less threatening.

To conclude, underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract are those psychological factors that drive individual behaviour and the belief that it will result in a beneficial effect, whether within the organisation, among co-workers, or within the individual. The underlying dimensions will also influence individual perception and subjective interpretation, which impacts on perceived role definition, belief of reciprocal mutuality, and unwritten expectations. To illustrate this build-up, the underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract are shown in relation to the unwritten dimensions pertaining to the Psychological Contract in the figure below:



*Figure 5: Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract*

### 2.1.1.3 Unconscious processes as a concept related to the Psychological Contract

Sections 2.1.1.1 and 2.1.1.2 explored two major concepts related to the Psychological Contract, namely unwritten and underlying dimensions. It focused on the role of individual perception and subjective interpretation, as well as underlying psychological factors (trust, internal commitment, and sense of security) as they relate to each other as part of the Psychological Contract. This section introduces a third concept related to the Psychological Contract, namely unconscious processes.

In a study conducted by Graham Bullen (2003), it was emphasised that most previous research on organisational behaviour failed to recognise the importance of personal and interpersonal dynamics as determinants of organisational functioning. Diamond and Allcorn (2003:492) also emphasised that, in order to really “know an organisation,” one should move well beyond “objective” organisational data such as the employment contract and individual performance/utilisation reports, and undertake a complex journey into understanding the unconscious individual and group processes that shape what happens in the workplace.

Without going into too much detail on the unconscious processes impacting the employer-employee relationship, the focus in this section will be to prove that individual unconscious processes are, in fact, related to the Psychological Contract. The exploration to the nature thereof, or what these unconscious processes really are, and how these unconscious processes occur within the client-consultant relationship, will be discussed in section 2.2.3.

#### 2.1.1.4 The link between unconscious processes and the Psychological Contract

In order to establish the link between unconscious processes and the Psychological Contract, the focus in this section will be on the psychodynamic view of organisational functioning. In research conducted by Sher (2002:59), the utilisation of psychoanalytic thinking in understanding human behaviour within organisations is emphasised. Sher stated that it enables the collection of data “that would otherwise be inaccessible to help formulate working hypotheses.” Psychodynamic organisational analysis helps to design ways to improve organisational performance by attending to the psychological reality and subjectivity that shape what happens in organisational relationships (Diamond & Allcorn, 2003: 492).

The central theme to psychodynamic-orientated organisational theory is that irrational and unconscious processes at work within and between individuals influence organisational behaviour (Atkins, Kellner & Linklater, 1997:141; Bullen, 2003:4), and that the tension between consciousness and unconscious processes plays a significant part in organisational functioning (Sher, 2002:59). The psychodynamic view regards organisations as processes of human behaviour that are experienced as experiential and perceptual systems, governed by unconscious processes whereby a lot of “thought and activity takes place outside of conscious awareness” (Diamond & Allcorn, 2003: 492).

This brings us to a concept called “organisation-in-the-mind.” Hutton, Bazalgette, and Reed (1997:114) described the concept *organisation-in-the-mind* as a model internal to oneself that is essentially unconscious. It consists of “what the individual perceives in his or her head” of how organisational activities and relations are organised, structured, and connected internally (Hutton et al., 1997:114).

The individual's "organisation-in-the-mind" is informed by unconscious processes that link different activities and relations that do not exist outside the mind but as a set of experiences held in the mind (Hutton et al., 1997:115; Ringer, 2002:152). This model highlights images, emotions, values, and responses in oneself that drive behaviour in organisational systems (Hutton et al., 1997:114).

Rousseau's ideas around the Psychological Contract stressed the fact that individual processes, such as frame of reference and mental models, underlie the creation of the Psychological Contract. She goes further by explaining that the Psychological Contract serves as a "mental model" that individuals use to frame events that occur within the employment relationship (Rousseau, 1995: 18-30).

As such, it is quite clear that the "organisation in the mind," created and evolved through unconscious individual processes, may play a big role in the creation and nature of the Psychological Contract. It emphasises the fact that the Psychological Contract resides in the employee's "out of awareness experience of the workplace," where routine roles and relationships are shaped mostly by unconscious processes rather than rational and intentional organisational contracts and agreements. These unconscious processes govern "perceptual systems," influence beliefs and expectations, and affect behaviour without individuals being directly aware of its influence. It provides the frame within which people trust others, the degree to which they will feel emotionally attached to the organisation, and experience a sense of security within organisational relationships.

The figure below illustrates how unconscious processes are related to the Psychological Contract, and that it forms the basis for both the underlying dimensions and unwritten dimensions related to the Psychological Contract.

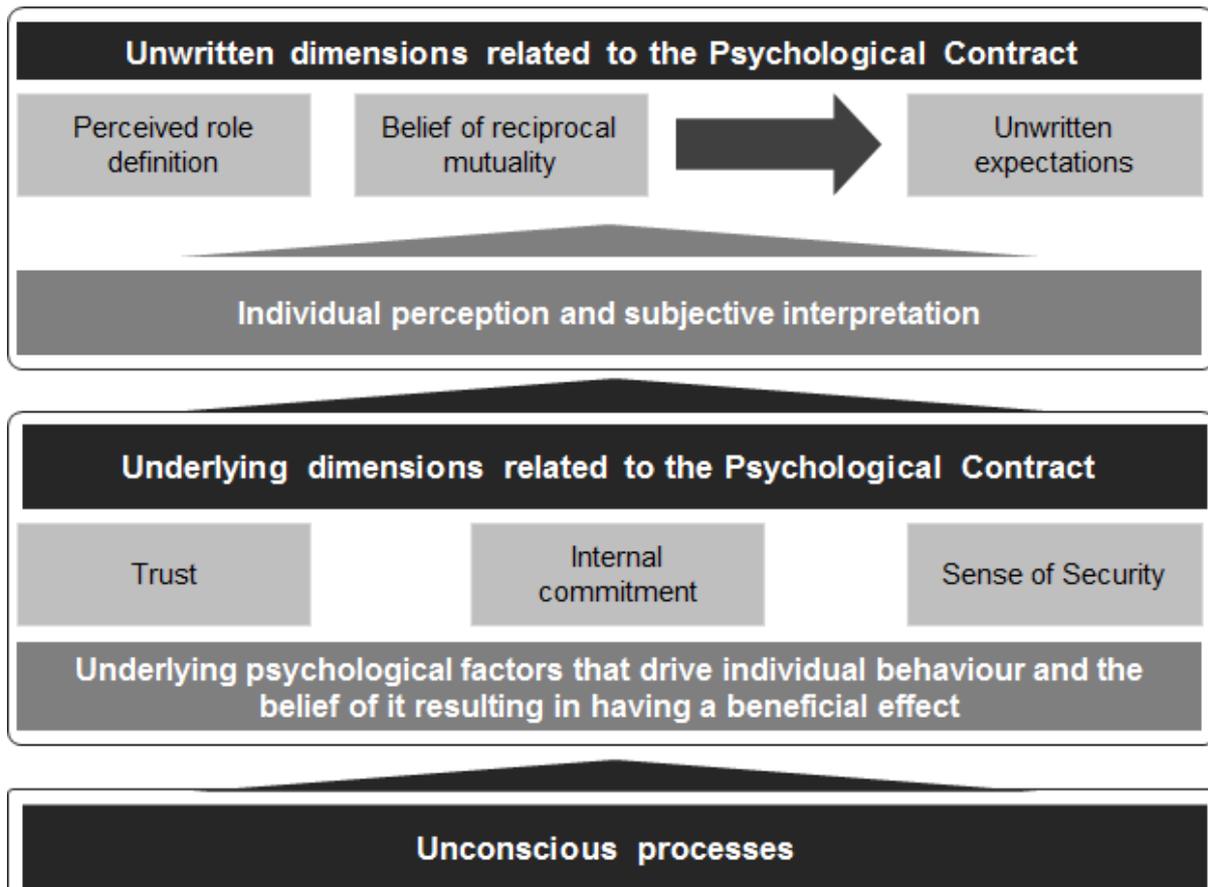


Figure 6: Unconscious processes as a dimension related to the Psychological Contract

Figure 6 indicates how the dimensions identified from previous research on the Psychological Contract fit together and relate to each other. Figure 6 can be used as a framework to explore the Psychological Contract in employment relationships to gain an understanding on how it impacts those relationships in order to ultimately develop ways to better manage them. This framework of the dimensions related to the Psychological Contract was developed based on research on the employer-employee relationship, and should be reconsidered for application to the client-consultant relationship.

The next section provides a review of research conducted on the Psychological Contract within the client-consultant relationship, and also explores additional research on organisational consulting. This information will be used as a foundation to position and adopt the framework illustrated in Figure 6 within the client-consultant relationship.

## **2.2 POSITIONING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT WITHIN THE CLIENT-CONSULTANT RELATIONSHIP**

This section is of critical importance to this research project as it will form the basis on which to conceptualise the Psychological Contract between the client and consultant. It provides a theoretical review of significant research conducted on the Psychological Contract and unconscious processes that impact and drive the nature of the client-consultant relationship.

### **2.2.1 APPLYING THE CONCEPT OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT TO THE CLIENT-CONSULTANT RELATIONSHIP**

To determine the relevance of the Psychological Contract, Cullinane and Dundon (2006) conducted a critical and discursive review on the origins and application of the concept of the Psychological Contract, as well as the relevant contributions in literature. They found that there are a number of serious conceptual and empirical limitations, and that the central theoretical assumptions that underline most of the Psychological Construct literature should be re-examined (Cullinane & Dundon, 2006:117-123). They concluded with a strong emphasis on the fact that the Psychological Contract will remain an important and relevant construct to utilise in future research pertaining to the world of work (Cullinane & Dundon, 2006:125).

Despite the relevance of the Psychological Contract for future research, the fact that the majority of literature on the concept of the Psychological Contract has been conducted using full-time employees involved in a continuous relationship with their employers (Parks et al., 1998:697; Soon Ang & Straub, 2004:357) also needs to be considered. This begs the question whether the Psychological Contract can be applied to the client-consultant relationship.

Chris Argyris and Denise Rousseau both emphasised that central to the concept of the Psychological Contract is the need to understand the role that individual subjectivity plays between two parties (Cullinane & Dundon, 2006:115; Rousseau, 1995). Rousseau goes further and firmly states that the two parties pertaining to the

Psychological Contract need not only refer to the employer and employee, but that it could in fact be “a client, customer, supplier, or any other interdependent party” (Rousseau, 1995:34). This answers the question stated above affirmatively. Not only can the Psychological Contract be applied to the client-consultant relationship, but as Soon Ang and Straub (2004:359) found, “the use of psychological contracts provides a unique and hitherto understudied perspective on the outsourcing relationships that develop between members of organisations.”

### **2.2.2 EXAMINING PREVIOUS RESEARCH CONDUCTED ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT WITHIN THE CLIENT-CONSULTANT RELATIONSHIP**

Three major studies, those of Martin et al (2001), Parks et al. (1998), and Soon Ang and Straub (2004), will be reviewed next, with the major findings and contributors to this research project being discussed.

Parks et al. (1998) conducted a study in which they utilised “categorisation schemes” of Psychological Contracts to highlight differences and similarities among alternative employment arrangements. In order to do this, they refined and elaborated on existing theory on Psychological Contracts to better capture the complexity of alternative work arrangements (Parks et al., 1998:699). Their research was based on the belief that the growth in contingent employment arrangements represents an evolution of the Psychological Contract theory, as it challenges the existing conceptualisations and measurement of the concept (Parks et al., 1998:698).

They submitted that the research domain of Psychological Contracts can be applied to gain an understanding of employee reality, which is necessary to gain insight into human “perceptions of reality.” They posited that it is of critical importance to consider human perceptions of reality in order to be able to understand workplace attitudes and behaviours, for it is people’s perception of reality that shapes their expectations (Parks et al., 1998:698).

The categorisations referred to in Parks et al.'s (1998:704) research, i.e. stability, scope, tangibility, focus, time frame, and particularism, are based on prior work by Macneil, Rousseau, and McLean Parks, to which they added two additional categorisations: multiple agency and volition. These categorisations refer to rather genetic aspects related to the Psychological Contract, e.g. "stability," referring to the extent to which the terms of the Psychological Contract are static versus evolving, thus, whether the contract has been implicitly or explicitly negotiated, and whether it will change through renegotiation (Parks et al., 1998:706). Another example, "time frame," refers to whether the individual perceives the duration of the relationship to be short- or long-term (Parks et al., 1998:712-713).

The value of the research conducted by Parks et al. (1998) for this research project lies in the propositions they developed based on previous Psychological Contract literature. The propositions focus on the effects of the identified categorisations on organisational behaviour, attitude-behaviour, and the attitudes (for both the consultant and core employees), which they believe to be important outcomes in managing the Psychological Contract (Parks et al., 1998:705). They highlighted that Psychological Contracts of consultants, in comparison with core employees, will be:

- Less dynamic or flexible;
- Narrower in scope;
- More tangible;
- Less focused on social-emotional rewards;
- Shorter, with more finite time frames;
- Regarded as unique;
- More voluntary; and
- Fragmented and ambiguous, as the consultant fulfils obligations to two or more entities (employer and client organisation).

(Parks et al., 1998:706-722)

They went further and linked these characteristics to underlying dimensions to the Psychological Contract, stating that it will be more fruitful to examine the underlying dimensions in exploring alternative work arrangements (Parks et al., 1998:700). In

doing so, the following became apparent as critical to the Psychological Contract between client and consultant:

- Client identification, internal commitment, and psychological ownership
  - Trust, described as the expectations or beliefs that another's actions will help, or at least not compromise, one's goals
  - Social-emotional rewards for "extra-role" behaviour
  - Perceived role definition, with the consultant simultaneously fulfilling obligations to two or more entities (employer and client organisation). They linked it to role conflict and potential gaps in expectations
  - Awareness of breach or violation based on the consultant's sense of obligation
- (Parks et al., 1998:705-722)

In research conducted by Martin et al. (2001), focusing on client productivity in management consulting, they found that an internal commitment and a spirit of team play is needed to ensure the client productivity required for success. They submit that internal commitment can be significantly influenced by expectation gaps that are driven and governed by the Psychological Contract. They defined Psychological Contracts as the "unwritten and unofficial contracts that focus on different expectations of clients and consultants," and stated that it emerges right at the beginning, during the first stage of the consulting process (Martin et al., 2001:144).

Failure to seek an understanding of the Psychological Contract between clients and consultants, "oversight," as well as over-emphasis on project management may lead to misinterpretation of the different expectations that exist between clients and consultants. They also note that a difference in perceived role definition and the corresponding responsibilities assigned for each party will further contribute to misalignment between clients and consultants (Martin et al., 2004:144-147).

With this, they firmly established the Psychological Contract as an integral part of the consulting process, and emphasised the need to match and continuously manage the expectations between clients and consultants (Martin et al., 2004:149). However, they do not provide any further information on perceived role definition and

how individual perceptions relate to the Psychological Contract, something that, as proved in section 2.1, is closely linked to expectations.

In a study conducted by Soon Ang and Straub (2004:357), in which they applied the concept of the Psychological Contract to perceived mutual obligations, they used three distinctive principles of the Psychological Contract theory to enable them to better understand factors leading to consulting success.

The first principle, mutual obligations, entails a belief in what one is obliged to provide, based on perceived promises of a reciprocal exchange. Mutuality, therefore, highlights the fact that one needs to explore the perspectives of both parties involved, rather than only a client's or the consultant's perspective (Soon Ang & Straub, 2004:357). Soon Ang and Straub (2004:357) go further by asserting that the recognition of mutual obligations is the essence of the consulting relationship, stating that the contract exists in knowing that specific contributions from one party will lead to certain benefits to the other.

The second principle, psychological (as distinct from legal) obligations, on which they based their research is founded in the knowledge that a written contract stipulating certain obligations (legal obligations) will always be supplemented by unwritten promises (psychological obligations). Rousseau and Parks (in Soon Ang & Straub, 2004:358) argue that the contractual relationship is in essence governed by individual subjective interpretation. Soon Ang & Straub (2004:358) contend that it is the individual's beliefs and perceptions of the mutual obligations, both legal and psychological, that drive their behaviour. As such, the Psychological Contract is broader than the legal contract, and includes both written, explicit terms, as well as the unwritten, implicit terms incorporated in the legal contract. Due to the nature of the Psychological Contract, it is furthermore important to also establish trust and flexibility within the consulting relationship, and this trust must extend beyond mere adherence to the legal contract, and include the unwritten promises and obligations between the parties (Soon Ang & Straub, 2004:358).

The third and final principle relates to the level of analysis required to better understand factors leading to consulting success. Soon Ang and Straub (2004:359)

focused on an individual (instead of inter-organisational) level of analysis. They assert that the Psychological Contract can be derived from both formal role relationships and interpersonal relationships between two parties, and that these relationships are closely intertwined and cannot be separated completely. Their focus is on the individual, taking into consideration the macro-organisational influences that will impact on the client-consultant relationship. They maintain that even as interpersonal relationships emerge, formal role relationships between individuals remain and continue to act as a boundary guiding individual actions (Soon Ang & Straub, 2004:359).

The research conducted by Soon Ang and Straub (2004) contributed significant theoretical value to this research project by proving that the Psychological Contract theory is a highly relevant and sound theoretical basis for exploring consulting relationships. The focus on mutual (rather than one-sided) obligations and the emphasis on the role of individual subjective interpretation and perception relate strongly to the unwritten dimensions of the Psychological Contract as identified in section 2.1.1.1 of this review. It also confirms the gap in research regarding the reciprocal nature of the client-consultant relationship identified in previous literature.

Also, the focus on psychological (as distinct from legal) obligations, emphasises the fact that managing the client-consultant relationship solely based on the specifications stipulated in the legal contract is not sufficient to ensure successful engagement. By focusing on the individual level of analysis, the research by Soon Ang and Straub (2004) contributed to existing research, which mostly focused on the interactions between client and consultants. This research project will also focus on the individual level of analysis, which will be discussed in the methodology section of this document.

To conclude this section, existing research on the Psychological Contract between client and consultant, although scarce, proved to be extremely valuable. The findings and contributions discussed will be further refined and interpreted in order to effectively conceptualise the framework of the client-consultant relationship as illustrated in Figure 6. This will be done in section 2.3 of this review.

Additional research and information on organisational consulting not specifically related to Psychological Contract theory but which will negate some of the gaps in existing research on the Psychological Contract between client and consultant will be reviewed next.

### **2.2.3 EXAMINING LITERATURE ON THE UNCONSCIOUS PROCESSES AS THEY OCCUR WITHIN THE CLIENT-CONSULTANT RELATIONSHIP**

In section 2.1.1.4 (unconscious processes as a concept related to the Psychological Contract) a clear link between the Psychological Contract and the unconscious processes that govern our “perceptual systems,” influence our beliefs and expectations, and affect our behaviour, was established. In this section, these unconscious processes, as they occur within the consulting relationship, will be explored to serve as foundation to effectively conceptualise the Psychological Contract within the client-consultant relationship.

In a study conducted by Bullen (2003:2) in which he examined the potential influence of the unconscious client-consultant dynamics, the role of the consultant was positioned in relation to the organisational system as one that entails recognising and disrupting the patterns and connections within a system to facilitate effective change.

The definition of a client, defined for this research project as the organisation or a specific individual representing the organisation, required the researcher to consider the impact of the organisation as a system on the client-consultant relationship.

Based on the Systems Theory, the organisation as a system consists of many subsystems fulfilling various functions and processes that are in dynamic interaction with one another (Miller, 1993:17; Van Tonder, 2004:37-38). This leads to the origination of various unconscious processes within and between groupings and relationships to effectively manage and protect this system (Miller, 1997:190). The consultant entering this system by engaging with an individual or individuals representing the organisation causes these unconscious processes to be infused

into the consulting relationship (Bullen, 2003:49). In this process, consultants join the very systems they were asked to provide a “service” to, and the client-consultant relationship becomes the primary means by which the consultant can influence that system. The consulting subsystem has its own life that is both conscious and unconscious, which relates to and reflects the systems that it interacts with (Bullen, 2003:49). As such, conflicts occur between the unconscious dynamics that arise within the consultant as an independent system and those that arise from the nexus of interactions with the client system (Miller, 1993:191). The resolution of these conflicts requires an acute awareness and understanding of the unconscious processes in the wider context of intra- and inter-system interactions, as well as on an individual level within and between the consultant and the person representing the organisation (Bullen, 2003:4; Miller, 1997:190; Van Tonder, 2004:38).

The challenge that consultants face is how to gain an understanding of these unconscious processes and how they influence the effectiveness of the client-consultant relationship. The idea that these dynamics are unconscious means that the consultant needs a method to identify them in some way in order to interpret and then manage them. It is proposed in this research project that the unconscious processes at work in the client-consultant relationship form the basis of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant, and, if recognised and analysed, will provide a means for consultants to identify, interpret, and manage these unconscious processes.

As a starting point, the unconscious processes that typically emerge, manifest in, and characterise the client-consultant relationship will be identified through a careful review of previous research related to the topic. This investigation will focus mainly on psychodynamic-orientated organisational theory as applied to the client-consultant relationship.

#### 2.2.3.1 Psychodynamic-orientated organisational theory

The central theme to psychodynamic orientated organisational theory is that irrational and unconscious processes play a significant part in organisational life (Atkins et al., 1997:141). The psychological nature of work relationships may

therefore be understood to reside in the individual's "out of awareness" experience of the workplace, or the individual's "organisation in the mind" (Hutton et al., 1997:115; Ringer, 2002:152), as mentioned earlier, where behaviour, structures of power and authority, and roles and responsibilities are defensive screens against unrealistic anxieties and fears, rather than rational and intentional organisational policies or agreements (Diamond & Allcorn, 2003: 494). The consultant entering the organisation and becoming part of the system, results in these unconscious individual and organisational processes to greatly affect the process and outcome of the consulting relationship (Neumann, Kellner & Dawson-Shepherd, 1997:111).

Czander and Eisold (2003:476-477) maintain that deciphering or translating the unconscious processes or individuals' "organisation-in-the-mind" and understanding the resistances and defence mechanisms at play in the client-consultant relationship will greatly contribute towards effective engagement. For the purposes of this study, the focus will be on those unconscious resistances, defence mechanisms, and reactions found to be most evident in the client-consultant relationship.

#### 2.2.3.2 Anxiety – individual and group defence mechanisms

The client-consultant relationship is driven by a definite goal and purpose, often demanding risk in circumstances of uncertainty, which generates anxiety. These anxieties evoke powerful unconscious dynamics, which may lead to dysfunctional behaviour, irrational acts, and defensive routines (Atkins et al., 1997:142). Bullen (2003:25) maintains that anxiety forms the basis of all organisational behaviour, and proved that there is a significant amount of anxiety that manifests throughout the consulting process (Bullen, 2003:87).

According to the psychodynamic theory, much of the anxiety experienced in work relationships relates to earlier dangers faced by the individual during childhood that consequently remained unresolved (Atkins et al., 1997:141; Bullen, 2003:25). To cope with the anxiety that arises in work relationships, the individuals resorts to a variety of unconscious regressive acts that distort perception and provide a way to protect them from experiencing fear and anxiety (Czander & Eisold, 2003:476; Gilmore, 1997). These personal defensive strategies, often inappropriate for dealing

with the real situation, are unconscious and are out of normal awareness (Atkins et al., 1997:141).

Based on the original work of Sigmund Freud, Atkins et al. (1997:147), Bullen (2003:25-27), and Ringer (2002) described several individual defence mechanisms:

- *Repression* – unconsciously eliminating threatening material from awareness and being unable to recall it on demand;
- *Denial* – the unconscious process by which the individual refuses to acknowledge an unpleasant truth;
- *Projection* – whereby the individual project onto an external object that which is internal and unacceptable. Projection is experienced subjectively as being real and forms the basis of our interpretations of events;
- *Reaction formation* – the unconscious process whereby the individual recognises and expresses the opposite of what the person is actually experiencing, as what the individual is experiencing is regarded as socially or morally unacceptable;
- *Identification* – when the individual alleviates anxiety by assuming the characteristics or behaviour of another object;
- *Rationalisation* – whereby the individual uses “reasonable” and “acceptable” explanations to justify unacceptable behaviour;
- *Displacement* – when individuals unconsciously transfers aggressive feelings or behaviours to themselves or an object that is less threatening;
- *Isolation* – to isolate events in memory and deny access to consciousness, or to separate emotion from the content of a memory or impulse;
- *Intellectualisation* – where the event, memory, or thought that was isolated is overemphasised; and
- *Undoing* – when an individual unconsciously attempts to undo one act by performing another.

Bion (in Bullen, 2003:28-34), Czander and Eisold (2003:477), and Gilmore (1997) also identified group-specific defence mechanisms:

- *Me-ness* – an unconscious phenomenon where the individual tends to engage increasingly with his or her inner reality, leading to an increased preoccupation

with the self. This may result in a loss of faith and trust in any structure that is greater than the individual in an attempt to protect the individual's personal boundaries. Withdrawal, passive aggression, and avoidance of involvement may signify this preoccupation with "me-ness";

- *Dependency* – when the group unconsciously alleviates anxiety by looking to one individual for security and protection, often regarding that individual as "omnipotent" and "omniscient";
- *Fight/Flight* – an unconscious fantasy that the group's function is to preserve itself, and that the survival of the individual is dependent on the survival of the group. As such, the group will "fight" someone or something, or "run away" from someone or something;
- *Pairing* – joining individuals or subgroups that are perceived as more powerful in order to subconsciously alleviate anxiety;
- *We-ness* – where the individual members experience existence only through their membership of a group. They seek cohesion and synergy, believing that this cohesion alone will result in overcoming challenges. Passive participation is often a symptom of "we-ness";
- *Boundaries* – the unconscious process whereby groups establish boundaries (usually related to time, space, task, and information sharing) to contain what is inside the group and to separate it from other group systems in order to avoid anxiety and make the workplace more manageable;
- *Resistance* – where the group employs collective defence mechanisms to contain anxiety, often through projecting internal problems of the group onto others, blaming, and fault-finding; and
- *Projective identification* – an inter-system, unconscious process where one part of the system projects unwanted aspects of itself onto another part of the system that identifies with (takes on) the projection. The part that takes it on is consequently pressured into thinking, feeling, and acting congruently with the received projection.

According to Bullen (2003: 82-146), the unconscious themes that are most prominent in influencing the relationship between client and consultant (dominant unconscious processes identified, resulting from the need to avoid anxiety) are projection, rationalisation, boundaries, dependency, fight/flight, pairing, me-ness, and

we-ness. Another group defence mechanism that plays a critical role in the client-consultant relationship is projective identification, as established by Czander and Eisold (2003:477). Diamond and Allcorn (2003:502) also found projective identification central to the relationship between client and consultant, and stated that it is a mechanism through which to reduce anxiety experienced by consultants via transference and counter-transference. This brings us to the next unconscious processes most evident in the client-consultant relationship, which are unconscious reactions of transference and counter-transference.

### 2.2.3.3 Unconscious reactions – transference and counter-transference

There is an extensive amount of literature available on transference and counter-transference in the workplace. This is because, as Czander and Eisold (2003:477) stated, “transference and counter-transference are ever-present, irreducible aspects of any relationship,” and no one is neutral or free from the perceptual systems governed by unconscious processes (Atkins et al., 1997:141; Bullen, 2003:25; Diamond & Allcorn, 2003: 492).

Transference and counter-transference are those aspects of relationships that are shaped by preconceptions and transferred or projected onto the actual relationship with a real person or group (Atkins et al., 1997:147; Czander & Eisold, 2003:476). It stems from projective identification, as a defence mechanism against feelings of anxiety and fear, and limit, confine, and sometimes distorts the reality of relationships (Bullen, 2003:34; Czander & Eisold, 2003:476).

Transference can be described as the displacement of patterns of feelings, thoughts, and behaviour onto a person involved in a current interpersonal relationship (Diamond & Allcorn, 2003:498). It is essentially unconscious, though some aspects may become conscious through awareness and exploration of the meaning of these feelings, thoughts, and behaviours (Czander & Eisold, 2003:476). Transference reactions in clients are generated by the organisational context, through organisational culture, norms, structural hierarchy, roles of power and authority, and the organisation’s demands for performance (Czander & Eisold, 2003:480; Diamond & Allcorn, 2003: 498). These reactions sometimes have to do with the work at hand,

but more often they are associated with some past experience that is remembered and replicated within a specific relationship (Czander & Eisold, 2003:480; Diamond & Allcorn, 2003: 498).

Counter-transference, on the other hand, is the mirror image of transference, and reflects the consultant's own unconscious response to the client's transferred feelings (Atkins et al., 1997:147; Diamond & Allcorn, 2003:499). In counter-transference, the consultant becomes intimately involved with the thinking of the organisation and experiences the client's feelings as his or her own (Bullen, 2003:34; Diamond & Allcorn, 2002:498; Sher, 2002:61). This may lead to the consultant absorbing the emotion, anxiety, frustration etc., and acting out these transferred feelings (Bullen, 2003:34; Diamond & Allcorn, 2002:498).

It is quite clear from research that transference and counter-transference will greatly influence the outcome of the consulting process, and should be brought "into awareness" to effectively manage the impact thereof (Czander & Eisold, 2003; Sher 2002).

To conclude this section, there is no doubt that the concept of the Psychological Contract can be applied to the client-consultant relationship. Previous research, although limited, has successfully done so, and similarly reflects those dimensions related to the Psychological Contract between employer and employee to be existent within the client-consultant relationship. Current research on the client and consultant necessitated an additional dimension, unconscious processes (defence mechanisms and unconscious reactions), to be considered as part of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant in order to ensure that consultants have the means to identify, interpret, and manage those aspects that impact on the client-consultant relationship. The next section will conceptualise the Psychological Contract within the client-consultant relationship by indicating how the dimensions identified in this chapter fit together and relate to one another.

## 2.3 CONCEPTUALISING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT WITHIN THE CLIENT-CONSULTANT RELATIONSHIP

According to Kolb and Frohman (in Neumann, 1997:10), the consulting cycle consists of six basic stages. These are: scouting, entry and contracting, diagnosis, planning and negotiating interventions, taking action, and evaluating that action. Figure 7 illustrates Kolb and Frohman’s basic stages:

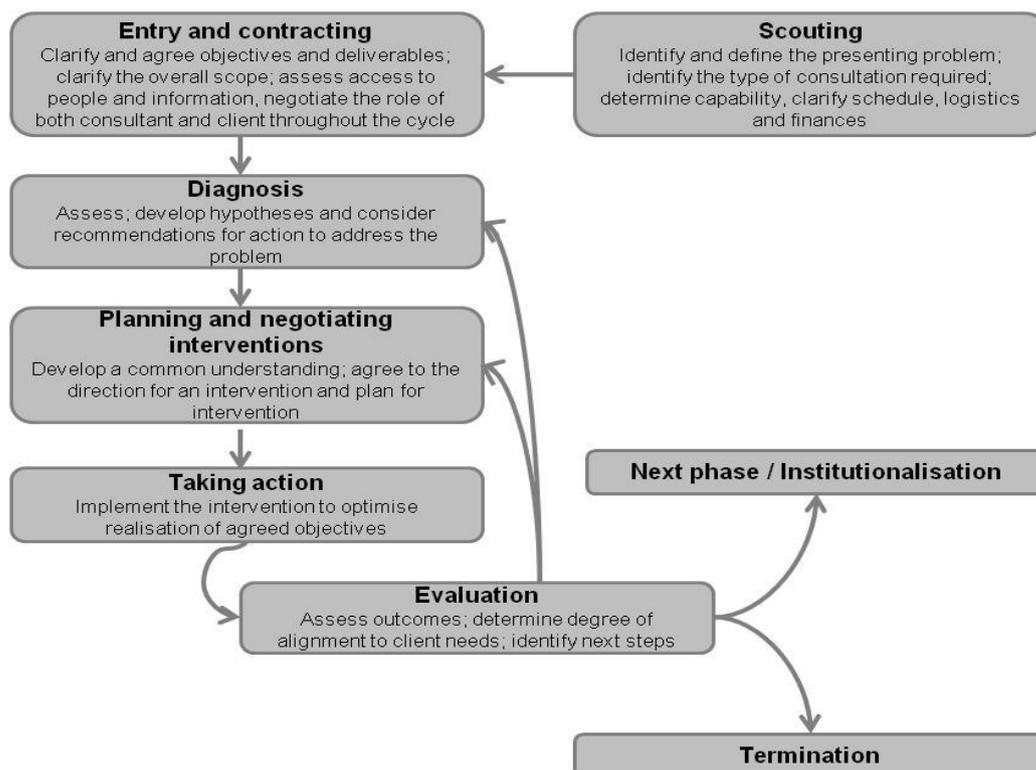


Figure 7: Six basic stages of the consulting cycle (Neumann, 1997:10-18)

Most significant of these stages is entry and contracting, as entry into the client-consultant relationship requires that both parties define and take up roles and responsibilities, often in an environment filled with uncertainty, risk, and anxiety (Bullen, 2003:56; Neumann, 1997:10). Neumann (1997:8) and Parks et al. (1998:698) pointed out that it is common for client and consultant to fail to clarify their expectations during entry and contracting, leading to misunderstanding, misconceptions in terms of role definition, and misinterpretation of obligations. Entry and contracting is also the stage at which the client and consultant form the “organisation in the mind” as a result of unconscious processes, which represents

the “reality” of how both client and consultant regard the context of their relationship (Bullen, 2003:50; Hutton et al., 1997:114).

The interpretations, understanding, perceptions, and “organisation in the mind” created during the initial stages of the consulting relationship will greatly influence the client-consultant relationship through the subsequent stages of the consulting cycle (Bullen, 2003:50; Neumann, 1997:10-18). As Ringer (2002) stated, it provides the basis for:

- Structures, arrangements, and procedures that provide the frame within which the client and consultant function;
- Images of both the client and consultant, and the relationship that follows;
- Patterns of interaction; and
- Concerns, issues, doubts, hopes, and fantasies that develop through projective processes.

Critical to successful consulting throughout the consulting cycle is a “working model” for the stages or steps, i.e. Kolb and Frohman’s basic stages, through which the client and consultant work (Neumann, 1997:18), as well as a slightly less tangible “mental model,” i.e. Rousseau’s Psychological Contract, to help interpret and frame the events that occur within the work relationship (Rousseau, 1995:27). The task of the client and consultant is to recognise the “working model” and “mental model” in order to understand what is going on, to reframe the situation, and direct engagement towards effective, productive activity (Atkins et al., 1997:143).

The focus for this section will be to conceptualise the Psychological Contract within the client-consultant relationship by indicating how the dimensions that influence this relationship (identified and discussed in previous sections) fit together and relate to one another. This framework was used as a basis for the field research as part of this research project, with the aim to present a “mental model” to assist consultants in identifying, interpreting, and managing those aspects that impact on their relationship with their clients.

### **2.3.1. CONCEPTUALISING THE UNWRITTEN AND UNDERLYING DIMENSIONS PERTAINING TO THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT IN THE CLIENT-CONSULTANT RELATIONSHIP**

Figures 4 and 5 indicate unwritten and underlying dimensions pertaining to the Psychological Contract between employer and employee as identified from previous literature. Unwritten dimensions pertaining to the Psychological Contract are those aspects that result from individual perception and subjective interpretation of both the explicit written terms found in the legal contract and implicit actions of the organisation. From employer-employee literature it is possible to identify three major unwritten dimensions: perceived role definition, belief of reciprocal mutuality, and unwritten expectations; these are strongly related to each other.

Research on the Psychological Contract within the client-consultant context conducted by Martin et al (2001), Parks et al. (1998), and Soon Ang and Straub (2004) also established a strong link between these three dimensions and the Psychological Contract. Parks et al. (1998:698) and Soon Ang & Straub (2004:358) postulated that it is the individuals' perception of their roles that drives workplace attitudes and behaviours. Soon Ang & Straub (2004:357-358) also established a link between perception and mutuality in stating that it is the individual's beliefs and perceptions of the mutual obligations, legal and psychological, that inherently drive the nature of the client-consultant relationship. Individual, subjective interpretation and the belief in mutuality embody the Psychological Contract between client and consultant (Soon Ang & Straub, 2004:357-359).

Martin et al. (2004:144-147) took it further, and stated that it is a difference in perceived role definition and the corresponding responsibilities assigned for each party that lead to misalignment between clients and consultants. Parks et al. (1998:718) agreed with this as they concluded that it is an individuals' perception of reality that shapes their expectations, and that perceived role definition could potentially cause gaps in the expectations of clients and consultants.

Based on the findings of Martin et al (2001), Parks et al. (1998), and Soon Ang and Straub (2004), the researcher contends that the three unwritten dimensions within

the employer-employee relationship, as identified and described above, can also be applied to the relationship between the client and the consultant. The underlying dimensions pertaining to the Psychological Contract between employer and employee, identified as trust, internal commitment, and sense of security, however, require a different understanding, as it relates to the client and consultant relationship.

The first underlying dimension, trust, described as a psychological state that drives behaviour and influences the nature of the Psychological Contract (Kadefors, 2004:176; Rousseau et al., 1998:395), causes client-consultant engagement to extend beyond mere adherence to the legal contract (Soon Ang & Straub, 2004:358). Parks et al. (1998:722) also found a strong relationship between the Psychological Contract and trust, stating that it will promote voluntary behaviours in both the client and the consultant.

The second underlying dimension pertaining to the Psychological Contract between employer and employee, internal commitment, also proved to play a significant role in the client-consultant relationship. Parks et al. (2004:712) found that internal commitment, together with client identification and psychological ownership, is directly linked to the Psychological Contract.

Martin et al. (2001:142-144) found that meaningful participation between client and consultant is driven by internal commitment. They also related internal commitment to unwritten expectations, saying that internal commitment can be significantly influenced by expectation gaps (Martin et al., 2001:144). As such, interpreting internal commitment as a dimension pertaining to the Psychological Contract between client and consultant requires consideration of the impact of expectations (as an unwritten dimension). Not only will internal commitment impact on unwritten expectations, as found in the employer-employee relationship, but unwritten expectations will also impact on internal commitment, greatly influencing the nature of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant.

The final underlying dimension related to the Psychological Contract between employer and employee, to do with “why” the individual develops a Psychological

Contract, is “sense of security.” “Sense of security” relates to the underlying need of individuals to perceive a certain amount of personal control over their environment. It is the belief that the individual is in an empowered and explicit relationship with their employer, which is required to effectively manage and contain the uncertainty that goes hand in hand with employment relations (McFarlane Shore & Tetrick, 1994:94; Sels et al., 2004:474-482). The research of Parks et al. (1998:706-722) found that the Psychological Contract of consultants focuses less on the social-emotional aspects pertaining to workplace dynamics, and is shorter, with more finite time frames. They stated that it is more voluntary, and that psychological ownership facilitates a sense of control (Parks et al., 1998:711-712). There is also no further reference to “sense of security” or personal control in any other literature on the Psychological Contract between client and consultant, and the researcher did therefore not consider it an underlying dimension for this research project. The researcher contends that the anxiety evoked by the client-consultant context plays a more pertinent role, with both the client and consultant resorting to unconscious defence mechanisms to manage and contain the uncertainty experienced within their engagement.

To summarise the conceptualisation of the unwritten and underlying dimensions pertaining to the Psychological Contract between client and consultant, there are three main conclusions:

1. The three unwritten dimensions pertaining to the Psychological Contract, as identified and described within the employer-employee relationship, can also be applied to that of the client and the consultant (perceived role definition, belief of reciprocal mutuality, and unwritten expectations);
2. Only two of the three underlying dimensions pertaining to the Psychological Contract, as identified and described within the employer-employee relationship, can be applied to that of the client and the consultant (trust and internal commitment); and
3. There is a higher degree of interdependence between the unwritten and underlying dimensions in the client-consultant relationship (specifically unwritten expectations, trust, and internal commitment) than that of the employer-employee relationship.

To finalise the conceptualisation of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant, unconscious processes as a third dimension will be discussed next.

### 2.3.2. CONCEPTUALISING THE UNCONSCIOUS PROCESSES PERTAINING TO THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT IN THE CLIENT-CONSULTANT RELATIONSHIP

In section 2.2.3 (examining literature on the unconscious processes as they occur within the client-consultant relationship), two main unconscious processes, defence mechanisms and unconscious reactions, that typically emerge from, manifest in, and characterise the client-consultant relationship were identified. These processes are illustrated in the figure below:

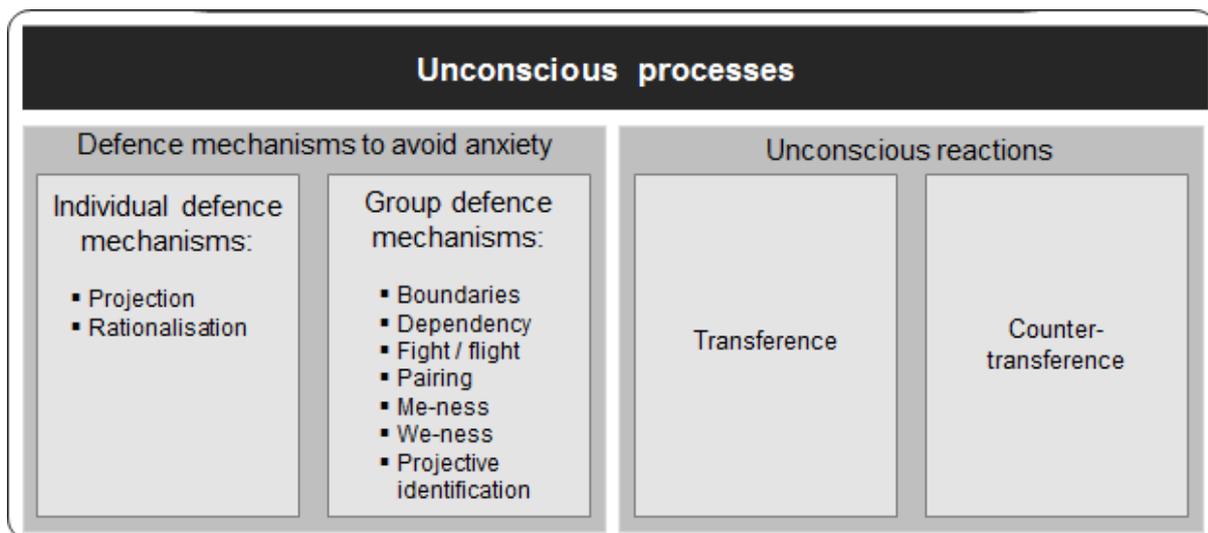


Figure 8: Unconscious processes that emerge from, manifest in, and characterise the client-consultant relationship

In section 2.1.1.4 (The link between unconscious processes and the Psychological Contract), a clear link was established between the Psychological Contract and the unconscious processes that govern our “perceptual systems,” influence our beliefs and expectations, and drive our behaviour. This was reflected in figure 6. The researcher postulates that the unconscious processes form the basis of the

Psychological Contract between client and consultant, and that they will profoundly influence both the underlying and unwritten dimensions identified.

### 2.3.3. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT BETWEEN CLIENT AND CONSULTANT

Figure 9 below serves as a consolidation of the conceptualisations on the unwritten and underlying dimensions as well as unconscious processes pertaining to the Psychological Contract in the client-consultant relationship. The figure also indicates how the unwritten and underlying dimensions, as well as the unconscious processes, fit together and relate to one another to serve as a framework for the exploration of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant.

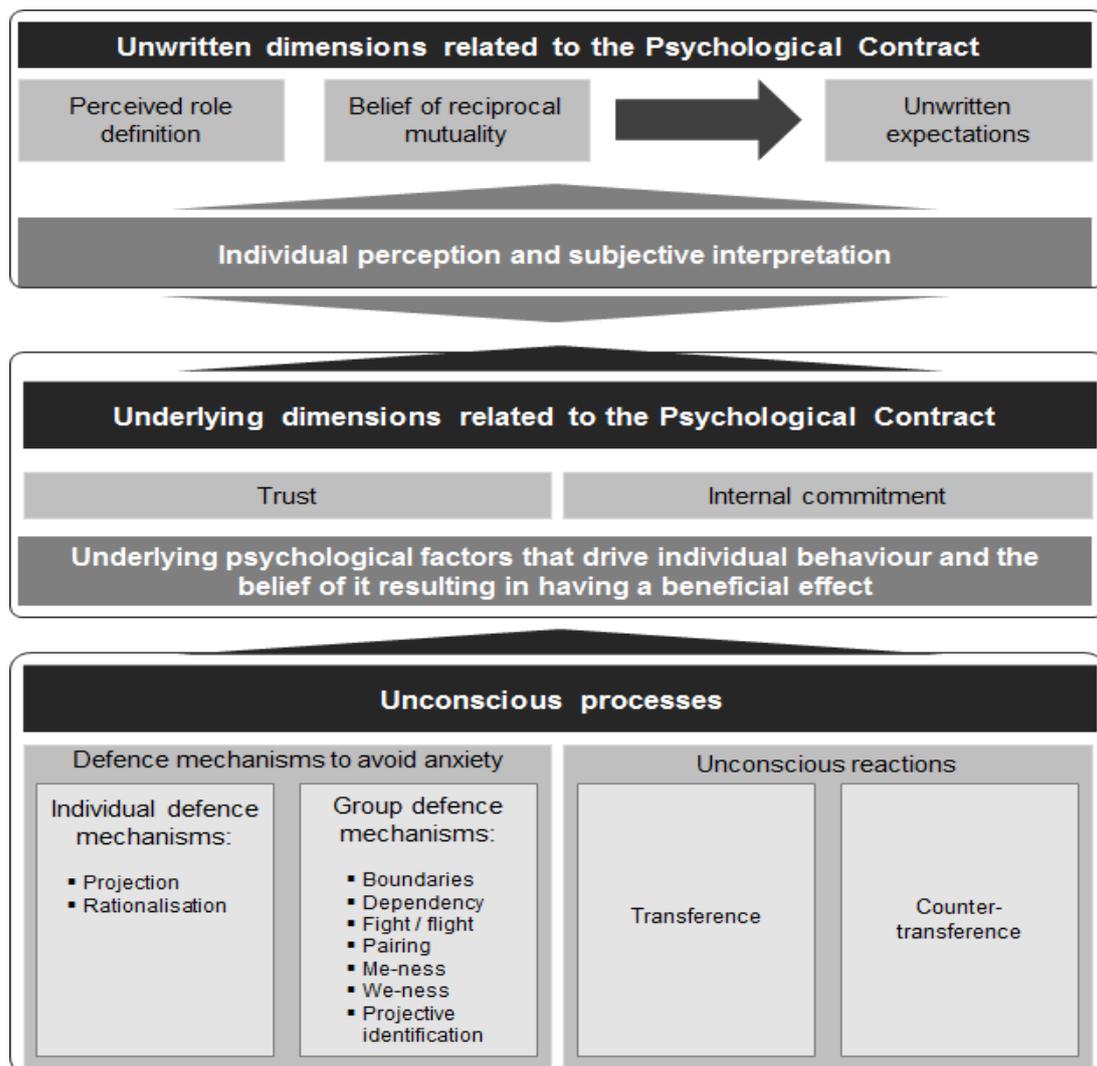


Figure 9: Conceptualisation of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant

## 2.4 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

As discussed in earlier sections, there is a great need for further empirical research on client-consultant engagement as there were several gaps identified in existing literature on the topic. It is the aim of this research project to close those gaps by utilising the Psychological Contract as a foundation to explore the dimensions at play in the client-consultant relationship, and to serve as a framework that will assist consultants to identify and interpret these dimensions, understand how they impact their relationship with their clients, and enable them to effectively manage the client-consultant relationship in future.

This section aimed to create an understanding of the concept of the Psychological Contract in the employer-employee relationship, to identify and categorise the dimensions related to the Psychological Contract, and to position it within the client-consultant relationship. This section also explained through theory that there is a clear link between the Psychological Contract and the unconscious processes that govern the “perceptual systems,” influence beliefs and expectations, and affect the behaviour of both the client and the consultant.

From a literature point of view, this section then conceptualised the Psychological Contract within the client-consultant relationship to serve as a framework for use in the exploration of the dynamics that influence the client-consultant relationship, focusing on both the client and the consultant through the unique lens of the Psychological Contract.

The next chapter will address the research paradigm or approach, research design, and research methods followed during this research study.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The research method flows from the purpose, aims, and goals of the research study, and is dependent on the nature of the phenomenon being explored, as well as the underlying theory or expectations of the researcher (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:49).

The chosen research method (research paradigm, research design, and research methods or techniques) should aim to provide the most effective means by which to explore the Psychological Contract between client and consultant, and be aligned to the researcher's "worldview" or belief about the nature of reality.

The research paradigm refers to the researcher's set of beliefs or worldview that defines the "world" under investigation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:107). It shapes the researcher's pattern or process of thinking, which will guide the research action, outline the research design, and determine the methods and techniques to be used (Hauptfleisch & Uys, 2006:23).

#### 3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:48), there are three types of research paradigms or approaches. Positivism, which is related to quantitative design, phenomenology or interpretivism, which is related to qualitative design, and the critical approach which is related to participatory research.

The positivistic view argues that the social sciences are similar to the natural sciences (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:21). In the positivistic paradigm, knowledge is based on the observation of individual behaviour in order to establish a "set of

probabilistic causal laws that can be used to predict general patterns of human activity” (Neuman, 2000:66).

Interpretivism, on the other hand, focuses on the study of consciousness and the understanding of the individual, rather than explaining causal relationships between individuals as objects (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:28). Advocates of interpretivism support ideas originally derived from philosophical phenomenology, most notably its emphasis on subjective experience and personal consciousness as a basis for human action and behaviour (Sandberg, 2005:42). As such, the epistemology of interpretivism is idealistic in nature as it prefers non-observable evidence (i.e. intent, reason, meaning, values, beliefs, etc.), and is concerned with how individuals experience their world, interact, and get along with each other (Neuman, 2000:71). Furthermore, interpretivism views objectivity as subjective understanding, meaning that to be objective entails trying to understand the world of “one who is like you” (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:33). There are several varieties of interpretivism such as hermeneutics, constructivism, phenomenology, and subjectivism, to name but a few (Neuman, 2000:71).

Lastly, the critical paradigm, introduced by Carl Marx, accepts both positivistic and interpretivistic truths, but only regards them as useful should they be successful in changing society for the better (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:38). Although it accepts both paradigms, the critical paradigm criticises positivism for failing to deal with the perceptions of real people and for devaluing the role that the social context plays in human reality. It reproaches interpretivism for being too subjective and relativist (Neuman, 2000:76). In short, the critical paradigm regards social research as a critical process of inquiry that goes beyond surface illusions to uncover the real structures in the material world, which, if applied, will effect a positive change in society (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:34; Neuman, 2000:76).

This research study was concerned with exploring individuals’ experiences of the client-consultant relationship in order to identify the implicit dimensions related to the Psychological Contract that emerges within that relationship. Based on the research purpose, the research aim, research goals, and the nature of the phenomenon under

investigation, the interpretivist paradigm, or, to be more specific, social constructivism, was chosen for this research study.

However, to ensure valid research, the researcher must choose a research paradigm that is in line with his or her “worldview” or belief about the nature of reality (Creswell, 2009:6; Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006b:2). Denzin and Lincoln (2000:108) emphasised this point in saying that the overall research paradigm is chosen based on three key assumptions by the researcher: ontology, epistemology, and broadly conceived research methodologies. Ontology refers to the researcher’s view of “reality” (or “truth”), and the entities it consists of, how they can be grouped, related within a hierarchy, and subdivided according to similarities and differences. Epistemology relates to where the researcher stands in relation to this “reality” or “truth,” as well as the approach followed to discover this reality or truth. Lastly, methodology refers to how the researcher goes about finding the truth. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:108). In essence, the ontology, epistemology, and methodology define the research paradigm, meaning that, for different research paradigms, the ontology, epistemology, and methodology will be different. Furthermore, ontology, epistemology, and methodology are interconnected and interdependent on each other, emphasising the fact that the researcher should have clarity about which paradigm will inform and guide the research. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:107-108).

Before elaborating on this researcher’s ontological and epistemological position, the specific research paradigm chosen for this research study will be discussed, after which the paradigm selected will be defended by explaining the researcher’s ontological and epistemological positions towards the research.

### **3.2.1 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM**

An interpretivist paradigm, social constructivism, provided the research paradigm for this research study. Social constructivism is a sociological theory of knowledge that applies the general concept of constructivism in considering how social phenomena develop in social contexts (Talja, Tuomine & Savolainene, 2006:85). Constructivism originated in the work of Jean Piaget and holds that the only reality we can know is

that which is represented by human thought. It defines human behaviour, promoting understanding thereof through inter-subjectivity instead of the general objective laws found in objective realities (Boudourides, 2003:5; Doise, 1989:390). Constructivism holds that there is no such thing as an objective reality, asserting that the individual mind constructs reality through interaction with the external world (Mills et.al, 2006b:2; Talja et.al, 2006:81).

Social constructivist asserts that the process through which the mind constructs reality in its relationship to the world is significantly influenced by the socio-cultural environment, history, and interaction with others (Talja et.al, 2006:81). Social constructivists believe that knowledge and truth are not found only in an objective world, but are constructed through and are dependent on human experience and interpretation (Boudourides, 2003:15). They assert that individuals seek understanding of the world by developing subjective meanings of their experiences (Creswell, 2009:234). They shift the attention from knowledge structures related to objective phenomena to “knowledge-producing, knowledge-sharing, and knowledge-consuming” individuals in social, organisational, and cultural contexts (Talja, et.al, 2006:86). Also important to note is that social constructivists assert that knowledge is first and foremost constructed at the social and cultural level, and is then reconstructed by the individual through interpretation into meaning (Shank, 2006:96; Talja et.al, 2006:86).

Epistemologically speaking, social constructivism emphasises subjective interrelationships and the “co-construction of meaning” in social contexts (Mills et.al, 2006b:2). Undertaking social constructivist enquiry requires the adoption of a position of mutuality between researcher and participant, as well as acknowledgement of the researcher as being an inevitable part of the interpretation of the data and subsequent research outcome (Mills et.al, 2006a:8).

From the above it is quite clear that adopting a social constructivist paradigm to social research required the researcher to carefully consider her position, beliefs, and interpretations in relation to the research so as not to compromise the overall validity or quality of the research. The implications of social constructivism as a

research paradigm for the quality of the research will be discussed in detail in subsequent sections of this research study.

Lastly, to refine this section, it is important to differentiate between social constructivism and social constructionism. Social constructivism is closely related to social constructionism in the sense that mental constructs are formed over time and through interaction with other people. However, there is an important difference; social constructionism focuses on the artifacts (i.e. production of knowledge and a “sense of social self” in discourse and conversations) that are created within a social context, while social constructivism focuses on an individual’s making meaning of knowledge within a social context (Talja et.al, 2006:89). As such, the distinction is based on the difference between knowledge and meaning - producing knowledge out of discourses and vocabularies versus producing meaning out of knowledge (Talja et.al, 2006:89). Talja et.al (2006:83) provide an accurate summary of the differences between constructivism, social constructivism, and social constructionism, which is represented in the following table:

**Table 1: Summary of the differences between constructivism, social constructivism, and social constructionism**

Metatheory	Constructivism	Social Constructivism	Social Constructionism
Origin of knowledge	Individual creation of knowledge structures and mental models through experience and observation	Knowledge is social in origin; the individual lives in a world that is physically, socially, and subjectively constructed; mutual constitution of the individual’s knowledge structures and the social-cultural environment	Knowledge is produced through ongoing conversations; knowledge and identities are constructed in discourses that categorise the world and bring phenomena into sight

(Talja et.al, 2006:83)

The common thread through the above-mentioned forms of constructivism is that they do not focus on an ontological reality or the intrinsic properties of “reality-as-it-is-in-itself,” but instead focuses on a constructed reality (Boudourides, 2003:15).

To conclude this section, the social constructivist approach was regarded as appropriate for this research study as the study intended to explore a social phenomenon through the constructed meanings that both clients and consultants attach to their experiences within the consulting relationship. Through this approach, clients and consultants were allowed to share their subjective experiences pertaining to a client-consultant engagement, and it enabled the researcher to explore their perceptions and interpretations of the dimensions that influenced that relationship. Ultimately, it generated knowledge of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant as constructed and interpreted by both clients and consultants.

In the following section, the research paradigm will be defended by elaborating on the researcher's ontological and epistemological positions towards this research study.

### **3.3 ONTOLOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL POSITION**

According to Aguinaldo (2004:133), it is not so much a researcher's choice of methodology that determines the validity of a research study, but the reasons for the choice as well as the researcher's theoretical interests secured by those choices. With this, he emphasises the researcher's ontological and epistemological positions, stating that they need to be made more explicit in the discussions of research paradigm and methodology, and should be reflected upon to effectively address researchers' own construction of the world in relation to their research (Aguinaldo, 2004:133-134; Creswell, 2009:5). Researchers' beliefs about the nature of reality and views about the knowability of this reality should be considered throughout the research, and form the basis from which they make sense of data and interpret the research findings (Brannen, 2005:182; Denscombe, 2008:275).

Lastly, it is important to note that the researcher's worldview or belief about the nature of reality is shaped by the discipline area, beliefs of mentors and advisers, social context, and past experiences (Creswell, 2009:6).

### 3.3.1 ONTOLOGICAL POSITION

Ontological position refers to the researcher's view (beliefs and perceptions) on the nature of reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:108).

Ontological assumptions underlying the interpretivist paradigm emphasise lived experience as the basis of human understanding (Sandberg, 2005:2). The interpretivist paradigm stipulates that the individual and the world are inextricably related through lived experience and that reality is constructed by individuals through their subjective understanding of the world (Sandberg, 2005:45). This means that individuals can attribute different meanings to the same concept or phenomena, and thereby creating multiple realities (Creswell, 2009:8).

To understand these realities, the researcher is dependent upon the interpretations of participants' experiences within a specific context (Creswell, 2009:10). Ontologically, the reality of clients and consultants in their experience of the client-consultant relationship and the dimensions influencing that relationship will vary. The researcher believes that this is a result of the meaning and understanding they attach to their experiences, their history, as well as the social context within which they are working. Fundamentally, the researcher believes that reality is socially constructed through lived experience. Applying this belief of reality to the current research study, the researcher believes that the client-consultant relationship is not a relationship in itself, but an experienced relationship between two conscious subjects within which a Psychological Contract is constructed in order to attach meaning and understanding and guide actions and behaviour.

The researcher was therefore interested in understanding the reality that clients and consultants attribute to the client-consultant relationship and the dimensions that influence their relationship, with the purpose of constructing a framework that reflected those individually constructed realities.

### 3.3.2 EPISTEMOLOGICAL POSITION

Epistemology refers to where the researcher stands in relation to reality as well as the approach to discovering this reality (theory of knowledge determining how the phenomena will be studied) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:108).

According to Sandberg (2005:48), there are three central epistemological questions that researchers should consider in their research:

1. How can individuals achieve knowledge about reality?
2. How is this knowledge constituted?
3. Under what conditions can the knowledge achieved be claimed as true?

(Sandberg, 2005:48)

In the following discussion, these three questions will be answered, indicating the researcher's theory of knowledge and approach to discovering reality.

As stated above, the researcher is interested in understanding clients and consultants' experiences of their relationship and the dimensions that influences that relationship. Based on the researcher's ontology that reality is constructed by individuals through their subjective experience and understanding of the world, the researcher believes that knowledge about reality is constituted through lived experiences of that reality.

Epistemologically speaking, the researcher believes that it is not possible to produce an objective description of the client-consultant relationship and dimensions that influence that relationship, but that an understanding of clients and consultants' experiences and meanings of that relationship can be obtained. As such, the three questions restated below, can be answered as follows:

1. *How can individuals achieve knowledge about reality?* The researcher gained knowledge through investigating clients' and consultants' experiences of the client-consultant relationship, and by exploring the meanings they attached to that relationship. This enabled the researcher to gain knowledge on their understanding (knowledge) of reality in order to conceptualise a framework (the

Psychological Contract) of the dimensions that constitute that reality. The researcher also believed that she would play an inevitable part in the interpretation of that knowledge, and would, during the course of the research, “co-construct” meaning of the participants’ lived experiences.

2. *How is this knowledge constituted?* The researcher believes that reality is socially constructed, and that knowledge about reality is constituted through lived experience of that reality. This entails the position that individual knowledge constitutes constructs of reality that are generated from experience and influenced by the socio-cultural environment, history, and interaction with others.
  
3. *Under what conditions can the knowledge achieved be claimed to be true?* Firstly, as Aguinaldo (2004:133), Creswell (2009:6), and Mills et al. (2006b:2) stated, the research design and methodology used should be aligned with the researcher’s “worldview” or belief about the nature of reality. Sandberg (2005:62) agreed with this in asserting that, although objective, factual knowledge about the social sciences is untenable, and that it is only possible to make truth claims when the research paradigm is consistent with the underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions of the researcher. As such, the alignment and consistency between the researcher’s ontological and epistemological position and the chosen research paradigm and methodology is a condition under which the knowledge achieved through this research can be claimed as true. Secondly, the researcher as “co-constructor” of knowledge requires an “interpretive awareness” to ensure that the researcher’s frameworks and subjectivity is dealt with throughout the research process (Sandberg, 2005:59) and does not compromise the integrity of the achieved knowledge. To ensure that the knowledge achieved can be claimed as true, the researcher will demonstrate that she has controlled and checked interpretations throughout the research process, from choosing the research paradigm and design to selecting research participants, collecting data, and analysing and interpreting the data obtained. Brannen (2005:176) emphasises the point where data are analysed and interpreted, as she stated that “it is at this phase that ontological, epistemological and theoretical issues raise their heads” and should be reflected upon for truth and validity.

In conclusion, it is believed that the overall research paradigm and methodology chosen (to be discussed in the next section) does justice to the ontological and epistemological positions that underpin the researcher's beliefs related to this research.

The following sections will outline the research design and method. The qualitative design, which relates to the interpretivist paradigm (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:48), was used to provide access to, and an understanding of, the participants' subjective experiences of the client-consultant relationship (Barnard, Schurink & De Beer, 2008:41), and the constructivist grounded theory method, commonly applied in the interpretivist paradigm, was used to discover research participants' reality by generating knowledge on their constructed reality through their attached meanings, beliefs, perceptions, and subjective experiences (Hauptfleisch & Uys, 2006:23; Talja et.al, 2006:81).

### **3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The research design is the plan of how the researcher will conduct the research and expects to use the data collected to make conclusions (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:72). It includes three important elements: philosophical assumptions, strategies of enquiry, and specific research methods (Creswell, 2009:3).

The research design used in this study is a qualitative design, utilising constructivist grounded theory to explore and understand the Psychological Contract between client and consultant. The choice of research design was based on the purpose and aim of the research, the research paradigm, and personal beliefs and perceptions of the researcher.

### 3.4.1 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

There is a great need for further empirical research on the client-consultant relationship, specifically those factors that constitute effective client-consultant engagement that goes beyond the tangible, contractual factors contained in legal agreements. There is, furthermore, a significant body of literature on the unconscious processes at play in the client-consultant relationship, but it does not specifically tie back to a framework or “mental model” that can be used to effectively identify, interpret, and manage these processes as they impact upon and influence the consulting relationship.

The aim of this research was to explore the Psychological Contract between client and consultant by understanding the unwritten and underlying dimensions as well as unconscious processes that influence the client-consultant relationship. Consequently, a qualitative research design was used, as it focuses on the meaning attached to subjective experience established through describing and understanding human behaviour from the perspective of the individuals themselves (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:270; Wentzel, Buys & Mostert, 2009:11). Qualitative research can be defined as “a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2009:4). The benefit of using qualitative research is that it generates “rich, detailed data that leaves the participants’ perspectives intact” (Auriacombe, 2009:826).

Some general characteristics of qualitative research are as follows (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Creswell, 2009; Morse, 1994; Wentzel, Buys & Mostert, 2009):

- It takes place in the *milieu* in which the phenomenon under study can be found;
- It seeks to gain insight into the *processes and contexts that underlie various behavioural patterns*;
- It focuses on the *meaning* that participants ascribe to their day-to-day behaviours within particular contexts;
- It allows the participants to describe their *beliefs and perceptions*, as well as the *essence of their experiences*;

- It attempts to study human behaviour from the *perspective of the participants themselves*;
- It requires that *various data sources* be used;
- It emphasises the collection of data that is of a *high quality* and as *in-depth* as possible;
- It requires the *researcher to play a significant role*, collecting the data directly from participants through observation and interaction with them;
- It requires the information to be *analysed* in an inductive manner and *categorised* into themes; and
- It is *interpretive* and enables the researcher to obtain a deep, complex, and detailed *understanding* of the phenomenon being explored.

As such, using a qualitative research design for this study enabled the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the dimensions and processes influencing the client-consultant relationship, from both the client's and the consultant's perspective.

### 3.4.2 EXPLORATORY RESEARCH

Because of limited previous research on the Psychological Contract between client and consultant, there is a need to further explore this topic in order to establish the Psychological Contract as a framework that could be used by clients and consultants to interpret, interpret, and manage the dimensions and processes impacting on their relationship.

Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:42-43) stated that the purpose of exploratory research is to gain insight into a situation through investigation, description, and interpretation. As such, this research study is explorative in nature as it investigates the subjective experiences of clients and consultants in the client-consultant relationship. The purpose of this exploration was to establish how the dimensions and processes that influence this relationship fit together and relate to each other in order to conceptualise the Psychological Contract between client and consultant by using empirical data.

### **3.5 RESEARCH METHOD**

The research method refers to the specific steps, procedures, and tools used in the research process (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:75). As such, it concerns sampling, the target population and units of analysis, data collection procedures, and data analysis. For the purposes of this research study, a constructivist grounded theory methodology was chosen as best suited to achieving the stated purpose, aim, and goals of the research.

#### **3.5.1 CONSTRUCTIVIST GROUNDED THEORY**

Grounded theory is a highly effective methodology in exploratory interpretivist research (Barnard et al., 2008:41). It can be defined as a systematic, qualitative research methodology emphasising the generation of substantive theory related to a process, action, or interaction in social situations, grounded in the views of participants (Auriacombe, 2009:824; Creswell, 2009:13; Glaser & Strauss, 1967:1).

Grounded theory methodology was introduced by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in the late 1960's in response to a perceived gap between theory and empirical research in sociology (Auriacombe, 2009:826, Lomborg & Kirkewold, 2003:191). With their approach, they "grounded" the theory established from empirical research by means of a new type of systematic comparative analysis that created categories from empirical data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:8). These categories then enabled the conceptualisation of "what's going on in a real life context" through the views of individuals (Lomborg & Kirkewold, 2003:191). As such, grounded theory moves from the specific to the general and aims to discover the "truth" that emerges from empirical data representative of a "real life context" or "real reality" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:16; Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006b:3; Shank, 2006:131). It is an approach that results in a detailed theory through a process of collecting data, identifying core theoretical concepts, developing links between core theoretical concepts, establishing core themes, and again observing to create new links and revising the theory through more data collection until saturation is achieved (Auriacombe, 2009:831).

Grounded theory methods provide guidelines that aid the researcher to (1) explore social and psychological processes, (2) direct data collection, (3) manage and conduct data analysis, and (4) develop an abstract theoretical framework that explains the studied process (Charmaz, 2003:311; Lomborg & Kirkewold, 2003:191).

Since the original work of Glaser and Strauss, Strauss and Juliet Corbin developed grounded theory to a more relativist ontological position by rejecting the existence of a “pre-existing reality,” a concept that strongly influenced traditional grounded theory (Mills et al., 2006b:3). From this position, they state that it is not possible to discover the “truth” from empirical data that represents a “real” reality, but that the “truth is enacted,” thereby proposing the existence multiplicity of perspectives and “truths” (Mills et al., 2006b:3). In their work they further emphasise a balance between the importance of considering these multiple perspectives and truths of individuals, and taking an objective stance in analysing human action/interaction in order to discover the truth (Mills et al., 2006b:4; Shank, 2006:130). Therefore, their work reflects both constructivism and postpositivism (Mills et al., 2006b:3), enabling the analysis of data and reconstruction of theory that is richer and more reflective of the individual or research participant, as well as the context in which the participants are situated (Mills et al., 2006b:4).

Strauss and Corbin also contributed to the evolution of grounded theory by standardising the process, and making it more practical to apply in social research (Shank, 2006:130).

Recent developments of grounded theory consider postmodernism and poststructuralism as inspired by social constructivism (Lomborg & Kirkewold, 2003:194). Already in Strauss and Corbin’s work there is a discernable constructivist thread, as reflected in their relativist position and belief that the researcher plays a more active role in constructing theory (Mills et al., 2006b:6-7). Following Strauss and Corbin, Kathy Charmaz was the first researcher to explicitly define her work as constructivist grounded theory, distinguishing between objectivist and constructivist grounded theory to provide an epistemological basis for bridging traditional positivist methods with interpretive methods (Charmaz & Henwood, 2008:245; Mills et al., 2006b:7; Thomas & James, 2006:770).

Constructivist grounded theorists seek to elicit multiple meanings from data to discover a reality that goes beyond the surface, searching for and questioning unspoken meanings of values, beliefs, and ideologies (Lomborg & Kirkewold, 2003:194; Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006a:12; Mills et al., 2006b:6-7). Several authors studying and commenting on constructivist grounded theory assert that constructivist grounded theory remains true to the strategies applied in traditional grounded theory, i.e. the (1) structuring of inquiry, (2) simultaneity of data collection and analysis, (3) generation of new theory rather than verification of existing theory, (4) refinement and exhaustion of conceptual categories through theoretical sampling, and (5) the achievement of “more abstract analytic levels,” but that it does so from a constructivist paradigm (Charmaz & Henwood, 2008:245; Mills et al., 2006b:6; Thomas & James, 2006:769-770). Although constructive grounded theory aligns with the form and logic of traditional grounded theory, the application of a constructivist paradigm to grounded theory does lead to significant differences that have to be considered throughout the research. The key differences are discussed below.

- **Reality and truth** – According to constructivist grounded theorists, the real world exists, but reality is a construction made by human beings, resulting in the existence of multiple realities (Charmaz & Henwood, 2008:245; Lomborg & Kirkewold, 2003:194). As a result, grounded theorists are able to construct an image of a reality, not the ultimate reality that is objective, true, and external as defined by traditional grounded theorists (Lomborg & Kirkewold, 2003:194-195). What is true is therefore constructed and reconstructed, and not the discovery of something that is single, universal, or lasting (Lomborg & Kirkewold, 2003:195; Mills et al., 2006b:6). Constructivist grounded theorists also assert that truth and reality are to be judged by the individuals in the specific situation and context, and not an “external imposed authority” (Lomborg & Kirkewold, 2003:195).
- **Knowledge and meaning** – Charmaz asserts that knowledge is based on human perspective and that it is mutually created by the researcher and the research participant (Lomborg & Kirkewold, 2003:194). As such, theoretical products resulting from constructivist grounded theory entails mutual, co-

constructed interpretive understandings of subjective meaning (Barnard et al., 2008:41; Lomborg & Kirkewold, 2003:194).

- **Interrelationship between researcher and research participants** – Based on the above discussion regarding knowledge and meaning, it is clear that constructivist grounded theorists place a significant emphasis on mutuality between researcher and participant, and the researcher's co-construction of meaning (Barnard et al., 2008:41; Mills et al., 2006b:7). They see both data and analysis as created from the shared experiences of researcher and participants and the researcher's relationships with participants - a view that opposes the grounded theorist's traditional role of objective observer (Charmaz, 2003:313; Mills et al., 2006a:8). Constructivist grounded theory reshapes the interactive relationship between researcher and participants in the research process. The researcher is kept close to the participants through prioritisation and analysis of their interaction, and participants' interpretations and constructions of meaning are kept intact in the process of analysis (Mills et al., 2006a:9; Mills et al., 2006b:7).
- **Ontology and epistemology of the researcher** – Researchers often begin their studies with certain research interests, disciplinary perspectives, and epistemological assumptions about the world (Charmaz, 2008:85). These can be problematic in that it has the potential to blind the researcher to aspects of the data, influence analysis and interpretation of the data, and, ultimately, impact the theoretical product (Lomborg & Kirkewold, 2003:194; Mills et al., 2006a:10). According to Charmaz (2008:85), this is a possibility, but it could also provide the researcher with points of departure for developing rather than limiting ideas if they are examined in relation to the area of interest, and their ontological and epistemological positions are identified before the research commences (Mills et al., 2006b:7).

To conclude, the work of Kathy Charmaz on constructivist grounded theory provides guidance in making meaning from empirical research data and representing subjective experiences as comprehensive theoretical interpretations (Mills et al., 2006b:7; Thomas & James, 2006:770). Constructivist grounded theory, however, is

not accepted by all, and has over time sparked criticism from various theorists and researchers. In the next section, some of the criticism is discussed, and the ways in which the implications of the criticism were addressed in this particular study are explained.

### 3.5.2 CRITICISM OF CONSTRUCTIVIST GROUNDED THEORY

Glaser rejected the notion of a constructivist approach to grounded theory by stating that an approach like constructivism brings in too many received concepts and ways of looking at the world (Shank, 2006:129-131). In an article by Glaser, *Constructivist Grounded Theory?* (Glaser, 2002b), he explains why grounded theory is not constructivist, and elaborates on constructivist data, stating that if it exists at all, it is a very small part of the overall data pertaining to traditional grounded theory. According to Glaser (2002b), grounded theory uses “all data,” whatever the source. Whether it is being told, how it is told and the context in which it is told, whether it be observations, documents, or the data surrounding what is being told, grounded theory supports the notion of “all is data.” Referring to the constructivist orientation that data are constructed from mutually interacting interpretations from both the researcher and research participant, Glaser (2002b) stated that this type of data is a small part of grounded theory data collection. He emphasised passive listening and emergent categories, and asserted that constructivist data are then obtained at a later stage during theoretical sampling (Glaser, 2002b). Glaser (2002b) postulated that constructivist grounded theory “blocks the true conceptual nature” of grounded theory, and concluded that it is yet another approach to qualitative research as a whole.

In this particular research study, although the researcher supports and followed the constructivist grounded theory methodology, the constructivist interview or data collection method only really occurred after initial and focused coding during the theoretical sampling phase, in order to, as Charmaz (2003:326) stated, “allow relevant data and analytic directions to emerge without being forced.”

Another criticism of constructivist grounded theory is that the researcher as co-creator might bring a set of preconceived ideas into the research setting, which could cause the theoretical product to be a mere representation of the reconstruction of the researcher's interpretation and meaning (Lomborg & Kirkewold, 2003:194; Mills et al., 2006a:10; Shank, 2006:130). Traditional grounded theory maintains that researchers should enter inquiry with as few preconceived thoughts as possible to increase their theoretical sensitivity to the emerging data (Mills et al., 2006b:4). In this regard, Glaser (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:37; Shank, 2006:130) asserted that a clearly defined process of interacting with the research setting should be followed in order to ensure that "the emergence of categories will not be contaminated by concepts more suited to different areas." The researcher should be theoretically sensitive and think in theoretical terms in continual development order to be able to conceptualise and frame the theory as it emerges from the data (Auriacombe, 2009:832).

In this particular research study, the researcher used memo-writing as a reflective tool to document the researcher's ontological and epistemological assumptions, subjective perceptions and interpretations, and overall thinking about the research to ensure mutual co-construction of meaning during data collection and analysis. This enabled the researcher to reflect upon her theoretical knowledge and underlying assumptions, to gain awareness of and listen to and analyse participants' experiences openly, and develop rather than limit her ideas about the Psychological Contract between client and consultant. Memo-writing is an acknowledged tool in both traditional and evolved grounded theory (Mills et al., 2006a:10).

In the next sections, the specific constructivist grounded theory method and techniques followed in the research study will be discussed in more detail.

### **3.5.3 SAMPLING**

In the spirit of constructivist grounded theory methodology, the sampling technique should be flexible and iterative, and support the advancement of theory construction (Barnard et al., 2008:41; Charmaz & Henwood, 2008:243). The sampling technique

should also be appropriate for collection of relevant information to fulfil the data requirements for valid and reliable research (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995:85). The data should provide in-depth reflections on the experiences of participants who engaged in a specific relationship within a specific process. Therefore, non-probability, purposive sampling was used for initial data collection, and theoretical sampling was used for subsequent data collection following early data analysis.

Non-probability sampling is a technique which leaves the selection of samples for a study in the discretion of the researcher (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:166). The choice of non-probability, purposive sampling was influenced by the fact that the participants for this research study were a difficult-to-reach, specialised population, chosen for very specific characteristics (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:167; Ruane, 2005:116). The participants were selected based on the researcher's knowledge of the population, its characteristics, and the research purpose (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:166).

A negative aspect of this technique is that it is heavily reliant on the subjective considerations of the researcher (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995:95), and the sample might therefore not be representative of the population. The research study was, however, not focused on establishing facts about a specific group or reality, but on obtaining rich, in-depth information in order to conceptualise theory. This being a qualitative, exploratory research study, combined with a specific, difficult-to-reach population, supported the researcher's decision to use non-probability purposive sampling as an initial sampling method.

Once tentative categories were established, the researcher engaged in theoretical sampling to further develop the theoretical categories and advance theory construction. According to Auriacombe (2009:834), Charmaz (2003:325), and Charmaz and Henwood (2008:243), theoretical sampling helps grounded theorists to:

- Explore the properties of theoretical categories;
- Discover variation within theoretical categories;
- Define relationships or gaps within and between categories; and
- Achieve theoretical saturation.

The purpose of theoretical sampling is to further develop the emerging theory, and not to represent a population or achieve generalisability of the results (Charmaz, 2003:325; Charmaz & Henwood, 2008:243; Charmaz, 2008:103). Theoretical sampling requires only collecting data on categories that are incomplete or lack sufficient evidence in order to enable effective generation of properties and hypotheses that describes the underlying quality of the participants' experiences (Auriacombe, 2009:834; Charmaz, 2003:325; Charmaz, 2008:104; Glaser & Strauss, 1967:69). It further makes the categories more precise, explanatory, and predictive, and keeps the analysis grounded (Charmaz, 2003:325; Charmaz & Henwood, 2008:243).

In this research study, the researcher re-established contact with earlier participants to clarify concepts (codes and conceptual categories) and to collect data on categories that lacked sufficient evidence - an approach that is consistent with the recommendations of Charmaz (2008:104). Theoretical sampling continued until theoretical saturation was achieved, meaning that no additional data were found to establish new categories or further develop properties of existing categories (Charmaz & Henwood, 2008:243; Glaser & Strauss, 1967:61).

#### **3.5.4 TARGET POPULATION AND UNIT OF ANALYSIS**

According to Glaser (2002a:3), generating concepts that explain individual experiences can occur regardless of time, place, and context. He also stated that neither accurate evidence nor the kind of evidence or number of cases is crucial for generating theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:30). In addition, when conducting grounded theory, it is difficult to determine how many individuals will partake in the research, as sampling will continue until theoretical saturation is reached (Glaser & Strauss, 1976:61).

With this in mind, three clients and three consultants were chosen to partake in this research to generate data in order to establish tentative categories. The only condition that influenced the choice of clients and consultants was that they had to have experienced at least one end-to-end consulting engagement.

An end-to-end consulting process refers to a consulting engagement where all six basic stages of the consulting cycle, as illustrated in Figure 7, have been completed. Only clients and consultants who had gone through (1) entry and contracting, (2) diagnosis, (3) planning and negotiating interventions, (4) taking action, (5) evaluating that action, and (6) termination were considered for participation in the research study. The reason underlying this consideration is, as McFarlane Shore and Tetrick (1994:96) stated, that the Psychological Contract continues to evolve over time, and continues to impact work relationships. As a result, the client's and consultant's perceptions and subjective experiences of the client-consultant relationship might have varied, depending on the stage of the consulting process in which they were engaged at the time of the research.

As stated above, the same research participants were contacted again during theoretical sampling, and additional data was collected by means of semi-structured interviews.

Lastly, it is worth mentioning that the choice of population was not dependent on either the type of consulting or the type of industry. This decision was taken based on the following:

- Type of consulting and type of industry limited the amount of suitable participants; and
- The purpose of the study was to explore the Psychological Contract between client and consultant, not to apply the Psychological Contract to a specific type of consulting or industry (this can be done in future research).

### **3.5.5 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES**

The choice of data collection procedure was based on the type of data to be collected, as well as the techniques proposed by constructivist grounded theory. According to grounded theory, generating hypotheses from data requires only sufficient data, consistently compared and categorised, in order to suggest the hypothesis, not prove it (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:34). Grounded theorists furthermore depend upon flexibility in data gathering in order to pursue themes and

ideas by studying data and then returning to the field to gather focused data and answer analytic questions to fill conceptual gaps (Charmaz, 2003:312). They also support the use of various data collection phases and simultaneous processes of data generation and analysis to obtain the richest, most relevant information on the views and experiences of participants (Creswell, 2009:13; Mills et al., 2006a:12).

Full and in-depth data on the experiences of clients and consultants who had engaged in an end-to-end consulting process were collected. The methods of data collection for the research study included both short, reflective written narratives and semi-structured interviews, as is discussed below.

#### 3.5.5.1 Short, reflective narratives

Constructivist grounded theorists focus on locating their data in a context or social process (Charmaz, 2003:314-315). The constructivist approach to grounded theory favours narratives as they provide rich, descriptive data on events, contextual aspects, and experiences of individuals. Narratives enhance the perspectives of participants, and support an “interpretive frame” for conducting research (Charmaz, 2003:327). The researcher therefore chose to use narratives as a primary data collection method in this research study.

Narratives are characterised by perspective and context, and yield information that may not be made available by other methods, providing access to subjective experience, insights into conceptions, and opening up new ways of studying individual reality (Smith, 2000:328). The uniqueness of narratives manifests in extremely rich data on the individual’s perceptions and state of understanding or meaning assigned to experiences (Lieblich et al., 1998:9; Smith, 2000:328; Treichel and Schwelling, 2003).

Each individual’s narrative is unique and illuminates subjective experiences, providing extended, continuously unfolding empirical data on the actual experiences of the individual (Casey, 1996:250). Lieblich et al. (1998:8) stated that narratives provide one of the clearest channels for learning about the lives, experienced reality and inner world of individuals as it accounts of past, present, and future perceptions

on how the individuals understand their contexts, cultures, and selves (Stuhlmiller and Thorsen, 1997:143). An additional function of narratives, as emphasised by Smith (2000:328), is that it “construct a person’s knowledge,” a concept that strongly underlies social constructivism and was critical to explore in this research in order to be able to conceptualise the Psychological Contract between client and consultant.

Once it became clear that the use of narratives would be a good starting point to collect data for this research study, three key aspects to consider emerged from previous research on narratives as well as research that had made use of narrative methods. These considerations were:

1. The scope of the narrative;
2. The type of narrative or narrative approach; and
3. Whether the narrative should be verbal or written.

The types of narratives vary considerably, from longitudinal narratives, life narratives, and personal narratives, to shorter, contextual or situational specific narratives (Smith, 2000:328, Smythe & Murray, 2000:327). Nygren and Blom (2001:370) conducted extensive research on short, reflective narratives, and found that the application thereof is well suited to exploring individual perception, as well as the creation of meaning from personal experience in social contexts. Also, with short, reflective narratives, the process of reflection brings to consciousness important knowledge that may provide a better understanding of the personal meaning and perspective of individuals in relation to their experiences and contexts (Nygren & Blom, 2001:370; Talja et al., 2006:86).

In line with the social constructivist paradigm and constructivist grounded theory methodology discussed in sections 3.1.1 and 3.4.1, short reflective narratives:

- Locate experience within a context and social process;
- Enable the construction of knowledge by the participants;
- Enable the reconstruction of knowledge by the participants through interpretation;
- Allow the participants to share knowledge and interpretations;

- Enable the researcher to explore their knowledge and interpretations, and identify initial categories; and
- Form a basis on which to plan for and conduct theoretical sampling.

The second consideration pertaining to the use of narratives relates to the narrative type or approach to the use thereof. Narratives in social research have many applications, functions, and purposes (Lieblich et al., 1998:2). There are also many types of narratives that can be used in qualitative research data collection. A model provided by Lieblich et al. (1998:12-13), through which they classify and organise the types of narratives, was used to decide on the type of narrative to be used in this research study. According to them, there are four main classifications of narratives:

- Holistic-Content
- Holistic-Form
- Categorical-Content; and
- Categorical-Form

The holistic versus categorical classification refers to whether utterances or sections are abstracted from a complete text, or whether the narrative as a whole will be analysed (Lieblich et al., 1998:12). In this research study, the focus was on the narrative as a whole in order to collect data on individual experience, perspective, and context. The content versus form categorical classification refers to whether the researcher is interested in the meaning of the narrative, or whether the focus will be on the structure, sequencing of events, and specific language used. In this research study the focus was on the meaning or the content of the narrative. The researcher used a holistic-content narrative approach to data collection, requesting a narrative that focused on the experience as a whole in order to better understand and interpret the meaning of the content.

The third consideration pertaining to the use of narratives in this research study related to whether the narrative should be written or verbal. The decision to use written narratives was based on the research of Nygren and Blom (2001) and Handy and Ross (2005). Nygren and Blom (2001:372) found that a person who writes has more potential in the moment of narrating to understand him- or herself, compared to

someone who tells the story verbally. Handy and Ross (2005:41) assert that both oral and written narratives involve an element of self-consciousness and self-interpretation, but that this effect is likely to be greater in the written word. In short, written narratives are more focused and reflective, more self-consciously ordered and structured, and contain richer information than transcripts of verbal narratives (Nygren & Blom, 2001:370-380; Handy & Ross, 2005:40-45).

Research participants in this research study were asked to write a short, reflective narrative of their experience of the client-consultant relationship in an end-to-end consulting engagement. This request was guided by the holistic-content narrative approach, and they were instructed to write it from their own perspective, and also to elaborate on (1) the context and (2) the dimensions (factors or aspects) and processes (individual processes) that influenced that relationship.

Lastly, it is important to indicate the limitations pertaining to this method of data collection. As suggested by Nygren & Blom (2001:381-382), and Handy and Ross (2005:40-41), the following aspects were considered:

- During verbal narratives, a skilled interviewer may enable participants to elaborate on aspects of the narrative that might not be clear in written form;
- A written narrative, being more structured, could potentially limit the categorisation of data into themes, as relationships between concepts might be missed; and
- The use of short, reflective narratives contains the risk of over-interpretation as the narratives may not always be exhaustive in content, meaning that the researcher may not have sufficient information with which to make accurate interpretations.

The researcher considered these potential limitations throughout the research process, and conducted semi-structured interviews with participants as part of the process of data collection and analysis to negate the effect of the above-mentioned limitations on the theoretical product.

In the next section, semi-structured interviews, used as mentioned above and as a method to return to the field to pursue themes, clarify concepts, interpret data, and co-construct meaning from the data, will be discussed.

### 3.5.5.2 Semi-structured interviews

Grounded theory interviewing is one of the most valuable methods of data collection in grounded theory, as it becomes the “site for the construction of knowledge” and raises the level of abstraction for the analysis of data (Charmaz, 2003:312; Charmaz & Henwood, 2008:246; Mills et al., 2006a:9). Grounded theory interviewing differs from in-depth qualitative interviewing in that interview topics are more focused and specific, and are targeted toward filling conceptual gaps in theoretical frameworks (Charmaz, 2003:312).

Once analysis of the data contained in the short reflective narratives was completed, and codes, themes, and categories compared, the researcher conducted grounded theory interviewing in the form of semi-structured interviews with each participant so as to gain insight into the information they provided, further explore their unique understanding, experience, and perceptions of the client-consultant relationship, and to clarify uncertainties in codes, themes, and categories that emerged from the narrative data.

Semi-structured interviews are ideal for these purposes as they provide the researcher with in-depth, empirical information that is descriptive and enables greater insight into participants’ subjective realities (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:249; Charmaz, 2003:3). They aid the clarifying of concepts and uncertainties in the data (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995:110) and facilitate a better understanding of participants’ social contexts, unique experiences, and perceptions investigated during exploratory research (Charmaz, 2003:3; Ruane, 2005:149).

The semi-structured interviews were informed by early data analysis of the short reflective narratives, which “shaped” the content and discussion (Charmaz, 2003:219; Charmaz & Henwood, 2008:242). To achieve an effectively “shaped” semi-structured interview as opposed to a “pre-determined” interview, the following

guidelines to constructivist grounded theory interviewing, recommended by Charmaz (2003:315-318), Mills et al. (2006:9-10), and Shank (2006:47), were pursued:

- The researcher assumed a reflexive stance and proactively planned for each individual semi-structured interview by carefully considering the data obtained from the analysis of the short reflective narratives to ensure that conceptual gaps were deliberated and theoretical saturation was achieved;
- The codes, themes, and interpretations from the analysis of the short, reflective narratives were collated as questions and conversation topics into a semi-structured interview sheet used during the interviews to guide and keep track of the conversation;
- The researcher provided the participants with their respective narratives before the interview to again reflect on what was written;
- Both the researcher's and research participants' views and positions were clarified in the interview;
- A sense of reciprocity between researcher and participants was established to enable the co-construction of meaning;
- Questions were sufficiently general to cover a wide range of experiences, but focused enough to elicit and explore the participant's specific experience;
- The questions, informed by early data analysis, were listed, and started with the most critical or important concepts to be discussed. Through open conversation, all aspects were covered in the engagement;
- The researcher listened actively and remained open to any new information or themes that emerged; and
- The researcher took notes and made comments on her subjective experience of the conversation, and these were incorporated into memos (an "Interview Memo" for each participant).

### **3.5.6 DATA STORAGE AND MANAGEMENT**

The narrative data were collected electronically via e-mail, and the semi-structured interviews were tape-recorded and then transcribed. The narratives and transcriptions were then imported as primary document data sets into Atlas.ti.

A tool such as Atlas.ti ensures secure and logically structured data storage, and provides immediate search and retrieval functions (Barnard et al., 2008:41; Smit, 2002:65). It also has a network-building feature that allows the researcher to visually connect selected texts, comments, and memos, and to link codes by means of diagrams (Smit, 2005:108). This allowed the researcher to manage and organise large amounts of qualitative data, and to extract themes and categories in order to derive meaning from the data (Guidry, 2002:101; Smit, 2005:110). The initial separation of narratives and semi-structured interviews as separate primary documents further made the data more manageable and enhanced the researcher's ability to compare data, codes, themes, and categories within and across narratives and interviews.

### **3.5.7 DATA ANALYSIS**

As data was being collected and captured, the researcher simultaneously started analysing the data. Qualitative data analysis refers to the process of organising, synthesising, and searching for patterns and themes in the data collected through qualitative techniques (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:490). Social constructivists view data analysis as a process that not only locates the data in time, place, culture, and context, but also reflects the researcher's thinking (Charmaz, 2003:313).

Methods for analysing qualitative, and in specific, narrative data, can range from coding activities to thematic, restructured analysis as derived from literary and philosophical analysis and social sciences (Lieblich et al., 1998:109; Nygren & Blom, 2001:370; Shank, 2006:180; Smith, 2000:327; Overcash, 2004:19). The most common approach to analysing narrative data is content analysis (Lieblich et al., 1998:110). Content analysis is a very popular method for analysing qualitative data in current research in the field of industrial psychology, as can be seen in the work of Van Tonder and Williams (2009) and Wentzel et al. (2009), to name but a few. It refers to the method of making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics (i.e. frequencies of most-used keywords, detecting the more important structures, etc.) of communication (Lieblich et al.,

1998:111; Smith, 2000:314). Content analysis is specifically relevant in market research and linguistic studies (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:491), and also relates to the categorical content classification of narrative research (Lieblich et al., 1998:12).

Catherine Kohler Riessman (2003:333), in her book, *Analysis of Personal Narratives*, recommend narrative analysis as opposed to content analysis when analysing narrative data, and asserted that narrative analysis illuminates “individual and collective action and meanings, as well as the processes by which social life and human relationships are made and changed.” Narrative analysis allows for the systematic study of subjective experience and meaning, articulating “truths” rather than “the” truth as from the perspective of both the researcher and the research participant (Kohler Riessman, 2003:340-342; Smith, 2000:328). The analysis of narratives also provides insight into individuals’ “out of awareness” experiences and the unconscious dynamics and processes elicited in interactive relationships (Diamond & Allcorn, 2003:492). Nygren and Blom (2001:376-380) offered a method for reading and analysing short reflective narratives that combines narrative analysis and coding. Kohler Riessman (2003:342), although not explicitly defining an approach to narrative analysis, also asserted that narrative methods can be combined with other forms of qualitative analysis such as constructivist grounded theory.

For the purposes of this research, the researcher decided to use the constructivist approach to grounded theory as the method to analyse data, and also to incorporate, as a point of departure, Nygren and Blom’s (2001:374) concept of naïve reading as applied in narrative analysis. This choice of data analysis method was based on (1) the use of a holistic-content narrative approach, (2) the overall research paradigm, and (3) the research study’s aim to gain an understanding on the subjective experiences of clients and consultants in the consulting relationship by focusing on the dimensions and processes that influence that relationship in order to conceptualise the Psychological Contract between client and consultant.

Atlas.ti, being particularly useful in qualitative research and grounded theory analysis (Barnard et al., 2008:42; Guidry, 2002:10; Smit, 2005:110), was used to support the textual and conceptual level data analysis through the ordering, structuring, retrieving, and visualising of data, codes, “Code Families,” and memos.

The table below illustrates the actual process employed during data analysis, as well as some key considerations or principles applied throughout the analysis, as emphasised by constructivist grounded theorists and various authors regarding the analysis of narrative and semi-structured interview data:

**Table 2: Data analysis method used, as well as some key considerations for principles applied throughout the data analysis process**

### Data Analysis Process

#### 1. Naïve Reading

Through naïve reading, “a sense of the narrative as a whole” was established (Nygren & Blom, 2001:375). The narratives were read, and “naïve memos” were documented to support initial coding (Nygren & Blom, 2001:337).

#### 2. Initial codes

After thorough familiarisation with each , the narratives were imported into Atlas.ti as primary document data sets. Initial coding was conducted by interrogating each bit of narrative data and asking, “What is happening in the data?” (Charmaz, 2008:92; Charmaz & Henwood, 2008:242). Every line was then given a short, active, and/or specific “name” which defined the actions and events that occurred in the data (Charmaz, 2008:92-95; Mills et al., 2006a:12). This was done in Atlas.ti by creating “Open Codes” connected to the relevant text area.

These were compared with each other, which resulted in a more conceptual level of data to be used for subsequent analysis (Charmaz & Henwood, 2008:242; Glaser & Strauss, 1967:35 & 106). An “Initial Code Memo” was noted for each of the narratives analysed.

It is important to note that although Charmaz and Henwood (2008:242) recommend the use of segment-by-segment coding for narrative data, the researcher used line-by-line coding as it keeps a researcher close to the data, reduces the likelihood of impeding the researcher’s personal assumptions and views on the data, and enhances the data’s analytic probability (Charmaz, 2008:94).

### **3. Focused codes**

Once the analytic direction was established through initial coding, the most significant and/or frequent initial codes were studied, sorted, compared, and synthesised into themes, noted in the “Focused Code Memos” (Charmaz, 2008:96; Charmaz & Henwood, 2008:242). This step was also completed in Atlas.ti by creating “Free Codes” and connecting the synthesised “Open Codes,” and also by connecting various “Open Codes” with each other.

### **4. Considering previous literature**

After focused coding, existing research on the Psychological Contract was consulted and adopted into the analysis by means of “Literature Memos” reflected in Atlas.ti (Charmaz, 2008:95). The “Literature Memos” were used to raise the focused codes to conceptual categories, described in step 5 of the process below, and also to keep track of further literature to be reviewed during theoretical sorting and integrating (step 9 of the process below).

### **5. Raising focused codes to conceptual categories**

In order to reach a higher level of conceptual analysis, the focused codes need to be raised to conceptual categories and the relationships between them have to be clarified (Charmaz, 2008:98). This was done by assessing which codes best captured what was happening in the data, constantly comparing them to ultimately define them on a conceptual level in Atlas.ti through creating “Code Families,” and linking them to existing codes (Charmaz, 2008:98-99; Glaser & Strauss, 1967:109). “Conceptual Category Memos” were also used in which “Code Families” were described, the relationships between them were clarified, and comments/questions to be clarified during the semi-structured interviews were noted. These comments/questions in the “Conceptual Category Memos,” as noted by Charmaz (2008:99):

- Clarified the properties of the category;
- Described its impact and consequences;
- Indicated how the categories related to one another; and
- Formed the basis from which the questions for the semi-structured interviews were compiled.

Conceptual categories were thus developed on an increasing level of abstraction as codes were added and compared, links and interrelationships clarified, and as the data analysis process evolved from the first to the second and third phases.

### **6. Theoretical sampling: Semi-structured interviews**

Once tentative categories were established and defined, the researcher engaged in theoretical

sampling in the form of semi-structured interviews to further develop the theoretical categories and advance theory construction (Auriacombe, 2009:834; Charmaz, 2003:325; Charmaz, 2008:103; Charmaz & Henwood, 2008:243). The initial codes, focused codes, and conceptual categories extracted from the analysis of the narratives, as well as literature reviewed as part of this research study, informed the questions and conversations during the semi-structured interviews. This information was collated as questions and conversation topics into a semi-structured interview sheet used during the interviews to guide and keep track of the conversation.

The semi-structured interview data was systematically collected and simultaneously analysed until theoretical saturation was achieved (Auriacombe, 2009:834).

### **7. Analysis of the semi-structured interview data**

The data collected during the semi-structured interviews were transcribed, and again imported into Atlas.ti as primary documents. The data were then analysed in a manner much the same as described in steps 1 to 5 of the process discussed above. Initial coding was, however, not conducted line-by-line, but segment-by-segment. Through iteratively adding of the semi-structured interviews, the narrative code list was refined (new codes were added, codes were consolidated, and some codes were identified as redundant) through comparison between and among the narratives and completed semi-structured interviews.

The codes that emerged from the semi-structured interviews were compared with one another, with existing literature, and again with original data sets, comments, and memos. The existing conceptual categories were refined, additional codes were added, and links were clarified.

An important process during the semi-structured interview was the documentation of the researcher's experience and subsequent interpretation of the content of the conversation during the interviews. Comments were made on the semi-structured interview sheet, incorporated into "Literature Memos," and considered throughout the subsequent analysis of the data. These comments, to a large extent, informed the analysis, as the researcher acknowledges that she had an impact on how the research participants interpreted and perceived the questions, and formed a crucial part of the meaning constructed and co-constructed during the semi-structured interviews (Mills et.al, 2006a:8; Ricoeur, 1981:153).

### **8. Saturating theoretical concepts**

Theoretical saturation were achieved through theoretical sampling, meaning that, in time, the

additional data gathered did not reveal any new properties of the categories or connections between categories, nor did it produce additional insights about the emerging theory (Charmaz & Henwood, 2008:242- 243).

### **9. Theoretical sorting and integrating**

This phase involved the weighting, ordering, and connection of “Code Families,” as well as a final comparison with existing research on the Psychological Contract between client and consultant, original data sets, memos, and comments. The purpose of theoretical sorting and integration was to conceptualise conceptual categories on yet a higher level of abstraction, and to develop the theoretical framework that emerged from the data analysis, memos, and literature, and to indicate how the Psychological Contract between client and consultant fits together (Charmaz & Henwood, 2008:242; Charmaz, 2008:107).

Instead of using Atlas.ti’s Network View function, Microsoft PowerPoint 2010 was used, since Atlas.ti version 4.2 does not allow one to link “Code Families” with each other. The researcher used the codes and “Code Families” that were created in Atlas.ti and graphically represented the relationships between them through the use of specific links. This allowed for a rich representation of the data and formed the basis for writing the first draft of the findings which will be discussed in Chapter 4.

The findings were then further refined, as discussed in Chapter 5, to provide a framework of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant by illustrating the implicit dimensions influencing the client-consultant relationship, and indicating how they fit together and relate to one another.

### **Data Analysis Principles:**

The data analysis was conducted based on the following principles established from literature on constructivist grounded theory as well as the writings of various authors on the analysis of narrative and semi-structured interview data:

- The researcher’s overall view and assumptions (ontology, epistemology, and subjective experience and interpretations) were considered and reflected upon throughout the research, especially during the analysis and interpretation of the data collected through semi-structured interviews in which the researcher played a big part in the co-construction of meaning (Aguinaldo, 2004:133-134; Creswell, 2009:5; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:108; Shank, 2006:180).
- From the start of the data analysis, comments and memos were made, which added to the

conceptualisation of themes and categories from the codes created. The comments and memo-writing were used as a tool to (1) record the researcher's ontological and epistemological assumptions, and reflect on it throughout the phases of data analysis, (2) link data collection and data analysis, and (3) elaborate on initial, focused, and conceptual codes, distinguishing between major and minor categories, and defining the properties of categories and relationships between categories (Charmaz, 2003:322-323; Charmaz & Henwood, 2008:243; Charmaz, 2008:101). Conceptual categories were thus developed on an increasing level of abstraction as codes, comments, and memos were added as the data analysis process evolved.

- The researcher conducted simultaneous data collection and analysis through the use of narratives and semi-structured interviews with all research participants to ensure extensive and “grounded” research (Charmaz & Henwood, 2008:242; Glaser & Strauss, 1967:109).
- Constant comparative methods were applied to establish analytic distinctions at each level of analysis (Charmaz, 2008:92; Charmaz & Henwood, 2008:242; Glaser & Strauss, 1967:114). This was done by comparing the codes, themes, and categories extracted from the various narratives with each other, exploring these within the semi-structured interviews, and comparing items of information emerging from the various semi-structured interviews with each other.
- Emergent concepts were developed by successively constructing more abstract concepts arising from the researcher's interactions with the data, review of existing literature, and interpretations of the data (Charmaz & Henwood, 2008:242).
- Theoretical sampling continued until theoretical saturation was achieved, meaning that, in time, the additional data gathered did not reveal any new properties of the categories or connections between categories, nor did it produce additional insights about the emerging theory (Charmaz & Henwood, 2008:242- 243).
- The researcher adopted an inductive-abductive logic by starting analysis with inductive cases, but checking the “emerging analysis by entertaining all possible theoretical explanations and confirming or disconfirming them until the most plausible theoretical interpretation of the observed data is constructed” (Charmaz & Henwood, 2008:242).
- The data analysis was based on the original meanings of “category,” “property,” and “hypotheses,” defined by Glaser (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:35-39) as:

*Category* – a conceptual element of a theory (also referred to in this study as a “Code Family,” as conceptualised in Atlas.ti);

*Property* – a conceptual aspect or element of a category (also referred to in this study as a “Code” with a specific relationship indicated in Atlas.ti); and

*Hypotheses* – generalised relations among the categories (also referred to in this study

as a “Network,” indicating the relations among the “Code Families” in Atlas.ti).

- The Atlas.ti tool was used during the data analysis process to manage the research data, and organise and extract categories and themes in order to derive meaning from the data (Guidry, 2002:101; Smit, 2005:110).

It is important to note that Strauss and Corbin, in their approach to grounded theory, introduced axial coding to specify the dimensions of a category by linking categories with sub-categories and making connections between categories (Charmaz, 2008:98; Babbie & Mouton, 2001:500). The researcher decided against the use of axial coding, the reason being, as Charmaz (2008:98) stated, “whether axial coding helps or hinders remains a question, whether it differs from careful comparisons also is questionable.”

### **3.5.8 MEMO-WRITING**

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the researcher used memo-writing as a reflective tool to record her ontological and epistemological assumptions, as well as overall subjective experience, interpretation, and thinking about the research. The memos were also used extensively during data analysis to elaborate on initial and focused codes, distinguish between major and minor categories, and define the properties of categories and relationships between categories.

Memo-writing is a very common tool used by grounded theorists (Charmaz, 2003:323; Charmaz & Henwood, 2008:243; Mills et al., 2006a:11). It links data-gathering and data analysis, and is the critical step between coding and writing the first draft of the analysis (Charmaz, 2003:322-323; Charmaz & Henwood, 243). According to Charmaz (2003:323), Charmaz (2008:102), Charmaz and Henwood (2008:243) Mills et al. (2006a:11) and Ricoeur (1981:155), memo-writing enables grounded theorists to:

- Reflect on the data, remember, question, analyse, and construct meaning;
- Maintain an awareness of the impact of the researcher’s background, beliefs, views, and experience regarding the research;

- Identify gaps in data to pursue in further interviews;
- Define the properties of categories;
- Note the relationship between categories and make explicit comparisons – data with data, category with category, concept with concept;
- Explore further ideas about categories; and
- Clarify categories – define them, delineate their conditions and consequences.

Mills et al. (2006a:11) also assert that the researcher's memos should reflect his or her "place" or position when the research started so as to prevent any predetermined thoughts, ideas, or perspectives from influencing the co-construction of meaning. Thus, memos join empirical data with the researcher's perspectives and original interpretations of the data, and help researchers to avoid forcing data into extant theories (Charmaz, 2003:322).

### 3.6 RESEARCH METHOD

In qualitative research, the concepts of validity and reliability, which describe to the quality of research, are replaced by the concept of trustworthiness (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:276; Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson and Spiers, 2002:2; Shank, 2006:114). Trustworthiness in qualitative research can be delineated into four concepts: credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Morse et al., 2002:2; Moss, 2004:362; Shank, 2006:114). These concepts can be described as follows:

- *Credibility* – refers to the degree of compatibility between the realities that exist in the minds of the participants, and those attributed to them through the research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:277). It refers to the believability of the research findings, knowing that it truly reflects the point of view of the participants (Shank, 2006:114).
- *Dependability* – refers to the knowledge that, should the research be repeated with the same or similar participants in the same (or similar) contexts, the findings would be similar (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:278). Dependability relates to

maintaining awareness of the origin of the data, how it was collected, and how it was used to conceptualise hypotheses (Shank, 2006:114).

- *Transferability* – refers to the degree to which the findings of a given qualitative study can be applied in other contexts or with other participants (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:277; Shank, 2006:115).
- *Confirmability* – refers to the details of the methods used and the degree to which it enabled the findings to be free of biases of the researcher (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:278; Shank, 2006:115).

In sum, the four concepts described above can be consolidated into a single statement on the quality of the research, i.e. that the trustworthiness of the research study will be determined by the degree to which the findings can be depended on and trusted (Shank, 2006:115). In order to ensure the trustworthiness of the research study, the following strategies were deployed:

- **Credibility:**
  - Prolonged engagement: remaining in the field until theoretical saturation occurred;
  - Persistent observation: pursuing interpretations in different ways (constructivist grounded theory data collection and analysis);
  - Triangulation: using multiple methods of data collection;
  - Member checks: asking participants to verify information, clarify codes and “Code Families” identified, as well as the interpretation of the codes and “Code Families”; and
  - Providing a reflexive account of the data collection and analysis through detailed memos and comments on the researcher’s subjective experience and interpretation of the data  
(Babbie and Mouton, 2001:275-277; Morse et al., 2002:5; Schurink, 2009:791-795; Shank, 2006:114).
- **Dependability:**
  - Audit trail/inquiry audit: maintaining a clear and constant path between the collection of the data and its analysis through detailed memos during data collection and each phase of data analysis; and

- Member checks: asking participants to verify information, as well as the interpretation thereof  
(Shank, 2006:114).
  
- Transferability:
  - Research design: adequate and detailed description of the research process;
  - Thick description: an extensive literature review to allow judgments to be transferred;
  - Purposive sampling: by selecting participants based on specific characteristic; and
  - Pattern matching: generating findings through thorough grounded theory review  
(Babbie and Mouton, 2001:277; Ruane, 2005:39; Shank, 2006:115).
  
- Confirmability:
  - Audit trail: emphasising the type and nature of the raw data, how the data was analysed, and how categories and themes were formed through extensive memo-writing during data collection and each phase of data analysis  
(Babbie & Mouton, 2001:278; Shank, 2006:115).

Moss (2004:362) goes further by stating that authenticity is another concept related to the trustworthiness of, specifically, interpretative research (such as this research study). Authenticity refers to the potential impact of a piece of research on the world at large in that it should (1) represent as many points of view as possible, (2) seek to raise awareness on a specific topic, (3) be able to offer an alternative way of thinking about a concept, (4) direct action that is appropriate within a specific context, and (5) serve as a foundation for increasing the knowledge of others (Shank, 2006:115-116). It is believed that this research study in particular will be instrumental in raising awareness by offering an alternative way of thinking about the dimensions and processes that influence the client-consultant relationship as well providing a foundation for increasing knowledge.

Lastly, the internal validity of the proposed research study will also impact on the quality of research. Internal validity emphasises the importance that the research

design utilised should be aligned with the purpose, aims, and goals of the research (Ruane, 2005:38). The research design, and more specifically, the sampling and data collection methods proposed, should have high internal validity in order to ensure the justification of the conclusions drawn from the data (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:274; Ruane, 2005:39). Alignment between the research design and research purpose, aim, and goals of the proposed research study was consistently maintained, and are commented on in this document. It is therefore believed that the internal validity of this research study is sound.

Trustworthiness, authenticity, and internal validity, as described above, should be applied to any type of qualitative research. There are, however, other aspects regarding quality to be considered, which pertained to this research study, specifically those related to the data collection and data analysis methods.

### **3.6.1 QUALITY OF SPECIFIC ASPECTS RELATED TO THE RESEARCH STUDY**

Several quality concerns arise when using narratives as a data collection method. According to Miles and Crush (1993:84), a narrative is a story about a person, events and experiences told at a specific time and place, which might have been equally well told in another way at a different time and place. Elements of a story can be expected to change from telling to retelling, with narrators often including deliberate or inadvertent fabrications in the narrative (Overcash, 2004:19). Narrators often assemble their memories and see new meaning in their experiences, stressing the data accordingly in a way that does not necessarily represents a true reflection of their original experience (Miles and Crush, 1993:92).

This brings up the question of representativeness of a particular group and the generalisability of the findings generated from the responses of those representatives (Miles and Crush, 1993:92). The quality implication here has to do with generalisability, which is a term used to describe issues around external validity in qualitative research (Ruane, 2005:41). Generalisability is the notion that what is revealed through the interpretation of data from specific representatives in one

research situation can be applied to representatives in another setting (Overcash, 2004:19; Ruane, 2005:41).

Overcash (2004:19) argues that the generalisability of qualitative research is the responsibility of both the researcher and the user of the research, since it is for the researcher to defend the research and for the user to discern whether findings are indeed relevant and applicable. Horsburgh (2003:311) also stated that generalisability is less of a concern in qualitative research when purposive sampling is used, especially if representatives are asked to provide relevant data on a specific phenomenon under investigation. Most important of all though, is that constructivist grounded theory is not concerned with representing a population or achieving generalisability of the results, but with developing an emerging theory (Charmaz, 2003:325; Charmaz & Henwood, 2008:243; Charmaz, 2008:103).

As such, the researcher was not concerned about achieving generalisability, but did address it to some extent through careful purposive sampling, triangulation, and verification of data across narratives and semi-structured interviews.

Another quality concern pertaining to this research study relates to the data analysis method chosen. Morse et al. (2002:2) stated that an inductive approach to data analysis may produce outcomes that are based on “selective” observations. Researchers may end up confirming the nature and/or existence of phenomena based on their own experience and beliefs about the aspects under investigation, causing their analysis to be obstructed (Morse et al., 2002:3-5). As mentioned earlier, the researcher moderated this concern by using memo-writing as a reflective tool (which incorporated observational, theoretical, and personal comments), and by conducting a systematic analysis of coding for themes and comparing categorisations, as typically applied in grounded theory research (Moss, 2004:363-364; Schurink, 2009:798-800). The researcher also moved back and forth between the different codes at different stages of coding, reflecting on her interpretation and the impact thereof on the analysis (Ricoeur, 1981:156). This led to subsequent changes in some codes, and even in “Code Families,” and was noted in the relevant memos.

The last quality concern pertaining to this specific research study relates to the use of Atlas.ti during qualitative data analysis. Smit (2005:110) stresses the fact that researchers lose “closeness” with their data when using a computer, and Guidry (2002:101) also emphasises that there may be a “loss” of understanding of the analysis when using computerised tools. Since this research was qualitative in nature and focused on constructed meanings that participants attach to their experiences, which were interpreted by the researcher, it was quite clear that the use of Atlas.ti might have a limiting effect on the understanding and interpretation of the data.

However, as Smit (2002:74) asserts, the real strength and contribution of computer software in qualitative data analysis lies in the ordering, structuring, retrieving, and visualising of data. It can not in any way discern the meaning of words or constructs, but it will create order out of a mass of research data, codes, concepts, and memos (Smit, 2002:74). The researcher only applied Atlas.ti as a tool to manage and organise the data collected. In this, the use of Atlas.ti contributed to the quality of this research as it enabled “rigorous, systematic, disciplined, and carefully methodologically documented” research data for effective analysis, which is crucial when conducting qualitative research (Smit, 2002:66). It is therefore believed that Atlas.ti gave more credibility to this research, as every step was documented and the researcher was able to reconstruct the analysis and deconstruct the analysis, for that matter, at any point in time.

### **3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The researcher upheld the principles of ethical research, abided by standards of professionalism and honesty, and conformed to generally accepted research norms and values (Mouton, 2006:238; Ruane, 2005:16). The following summarises the most important ethical considerations pertaining to this research study:

- *Free and informed consent* - Research participants provided their free and informed consent to participate in the research study at the outset of their involvement, and maintained the right to free and informed consent throughout their participation (Smythe & Murray, 2000:313). Free consent means that the

individual will voluntarily consent to participate, and informed consent means that all relevant information required to make an informed decision will be provided to the participant (Smythe & Murray, 2000:313). Free and informed consent relates closely to what Babbie and Mouton (2001:521) refer to as voluntary participation. Free and informed consent was documented in writing through a signed consent form.

- *Protection from harm* – the researcher, at all times, attempted to avoid harming the participants, both on an emotional level and in a professional capacity (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:522; Smythe & Murray, 2000:315). The biggest potential risk for participants in narrative research has to do with the emotional impact of having their story narrated, interpreted, and reinterpreted, and the researcher was consistently aware of this (Smythe & Murray, 2000:321).
- *Privacy and confidentiality* – no personal or identifying information about the research participants was, or will be disclosed without their permission. The researcher created pseudonyms for all individual and organisational names mentioned in the narratives and semi-structured interviews. The researcher protected the participants' right to confidentiality and anonymity at all times (Smythe & Murray, 2000:314), and all procedures for ensuring privacy and confidentiality were communicated to the participants.
- *Plagiarism* – proper recognition was given to all sources used, and specified in the required format.

### **3.8 CHAPTER CONCLUSION**

This chapter addressed the research paradigm or approach, research design, and research methods followed during this research study, chosen based on the (1) research questions, research aim and research goals, (2) the nature of the phenomenon to be explored, and (3) the ontological and epistemological positions that underpin the researcher's beliefs related to this research.

It positioned the interpretivist paradigm, or to be more specific, social constructivist approach, as the most appropriate approach for this research study as it allowed the exploration of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant through the constructed meanings that both attach to their experience of the client-consultant

relationship, and enabled the researcher to explore their perceptions and interpretations of the dimensions that influence that relationship.

This chapter also outlined the qualitative research design and constructivist grounded theory method as the most appropriate means to explore the subjective meanings of clients and consultants, and to discover their reality by generating rich, in-depth data and understanding on their beliefs, perceptions, and subjective experiences. The specific constructivist grounded theory methods and techniques followed in the research were also discussed in detail. These included: (1) the use of non-probability, purposive sampling for initial data collection, and theoretical sampling for subsequent data collection, (2) the choice of target population and unit of analysis (research participants), (3) data collection procedures, which included short reflective narratives and semi-structured interviews, (4) data storage and management through the use of Atlas.ti, (5) data analysis by using the constructivist approach to grounded theory as a method to analyse data, and also to incorporate, as a point of departure, Nygren and Blom's (2001:374) concept of naïve reading as applied in narrative analysis, and, lastly, (6) the use of memo-writing as a reflective tool to record the researcher's ontological and epistemological assumptions, as well as overall subjective experience, interpretation, and thinking about the research incorporated during data analysis and the phase of theoretical sorting and interpretation. Motivation for the use of each of these methods and techniques was provided in detail.

Lastly, this chapter also provided information on the quality of the research and ethical considerations upheld throughout the research process.

In the following chapter, information on aspects that impacted the research related to the research participants, as well as the researcher's ontological and epistemological assumptions, subjective perceptions and interpretations, and overall thinking about the research will be discussed. It will also include a detailed discussion on the analysis of the data and provide information on the themes and conceptual categories that emerged from the data collected and analysed.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter provided a theoretical overview of the research methodology that was used in this research study. In this chapter, the findings of the research study will be discussed and interpreted. The specific codes, themes, and conceptual categories that emerged from the analysis of the data will be examined, and the literature consulted during this process (as reflected in Chapter 2) will be contextualised. Additional literature reviewed during the process of analysis as new concepts emerged, will also be integrated.

The first part of the chapter will focus on aspects that impacted the research related to the research participants, as well as the researcher's ontological and epistemological assumptions, subjective perceptions and interpretations, and overall thinking about the research.

#### **4.2 THE FRAMEWORK AND WORLDVIEW OF THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS AND THE RESEARCHER**

As Sandberg (2005:45) and Creswell (2009:8) stated, reality is constructed by individuals through their subjective interpretation of the world and the meanings they attach to specific experiences, concepts, or phenomena. The process through which the mind constructs this reality is significantly influenced by the socio-cultural environment, history, and interaction with others (Talja et.al, 2006:81).

The researcher believes that this construction of reality through subjective interpretation was ever present during the research, specifically during the phases of data collection (subjective interpretation by both the research participants and researcher) and data analysis (subjective interpretation by the researcher).

This section attempts to provide transparency on the interpretations made in this research, expose the underlying assumptions on which results were based, and present the understandings of concepts that emerged from the data within the framework and worldview of the people involved in this research (Ricoeur, 1981:154; Schurink, 2009:789).

#### **4.2.1 THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

The purpose of this study was to gain a collective understanding from both a client's and a consultant's perspective on those dimensions influencing the client-consultant relationship that are not incorporated in contractual agreements, but that are implicit and profoundly impact the outcome, productivity, and effectiveness of that relationship. Six participants (three clients and three consultants) were selected and asked to write a short reflective narrative about their experience of the client-consultant relationship as experienced in an end-to-end consulting engagement. They were furthermore asked to write it from their own perspective, and also to elaborate on the context, dimensions (factors or aspects), and processes (individual processes) that influenced that relationship.

Once analysis of the short reflective narratives was completed and codes, themes, and categories were compared, the researcher conducted grounded theory interviewing in the form of semi-structured interviews with each participant in order to gain insight into the information they provided, to further explore their unique understanding, experience, and perceptions of the client-consultant relationship, and to clarify uncertainties in codes, themes, and categories that emerged from the narrative data.

From the onset of the analysis and comparison of the codes emerging from the short reflective narratives, the researcher noticed two significant occurrences:

1. There was a substantial difference in the participants' description of their experience of the client-consultant engagement. For example, narratives 2, 3, and 5 focused very much on providing a description of the project context,

scope, implementation, and progress, with very little information on the implicit dimensions influencing the client-consultant relationship in that project. Narratives 4 and 6, on the other hand, provided very detailed accounts of what happened in the project, what happened in the client-consultant relationship, and what dimensions influenced that relationship, such as perceived role, personal characteristics, personal emotions, unwritten expectations, work ethic, trust, internal commitment, and even defence mechanisms and unconscious reactions.

2. Different meanings and experiences were attached to similar situations. For example, “insufficient project scoping, management and governance” was a central theme in both narratives 2 and 4. In narrative 2, however, the participant interpreted it as such, and continued to manage his relationship with the client in line with the contractual agreements established, whereas in narrative 4, the events that related to insufficient project scoping, management, and governance had a significant impact on the consultant’s perceived role, perception of the client, and personal emotions experienced within the client-consultant relationship, which, in turn, impacted and influenced her behaviour in, and perception of, that relationship.

As Creswell (2009:10) asserted, the reality of the research participants will vary in their experience of the client-consultant relationship, and the researcher is dependent on the interpretations of their experiences in that relationship. In order to ensure rigorous interpretation, the researcher reflected on the participants’ industry, current work environment, and current role to interpret the data. The researcher also devised questions to explore their interpretations during the semi-structured interviews.

Following the semi-structured interviews, during analysis of the semi-structure interview data, the researcher again became aware of the two points mentioned above, but also noticed that she related to each of the participants in a different way. For example, during semi-structured interviews 1, 3, and 5, although a sense of reciprocity was established between the researcher and participants, the content of the conversations circled around clarification and confirmation, whereas

during semi-structured interviews 2, 4, and 6, the content of the conversations evolved into co-construction of meaning. The researcher also experienced interviews 2, 4, and 6 as exciting and meaningful. However, when reading through the transcribed data of semi-structured interviews 2, 4, and 6, it did not really reflect the meaning ascribed during the actual interviews (the comments incorporated in the semi-structured interview sheets).

Upon reflecting on this, the researcher became aware that she experienced a closer connection between herself and the participants involved in semi-structured interviews 2, 4, and 6. She could relate to them in a more personal manner, she shared their framework and worldviews, and could even identify with them. During semi-structured interviews 2, 4, and 6, she was “listening for meaning” and obtained meaning from the conversations, which was not reflected in the transcribed data. This awareness was incorporated into the analysis of the semi-structure interview data as the researcher continuously reflected on her ontological and epistemological assumptions, subjective perceptions and interpretations, and overall thinking about the research.

The researcher acknowledges that the research participants as subjective beings, as well as the researcher herself, had a significant impact on the research. The table below illustrates some of the research participant characteristics that were considered during the research. In the next section, the researcher will elaborate on her ontological and epistemological assumptions, subjective perceptions and interpretations, and overall thinking about the research as it impacted this research study.

**Table 3: The research participants**

	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5	Participant 6
Client or Consultant	Client	Consultant	Consultant	Consultant	Client	Client
Narrative	1	2	3	4	5	6
Semi-structured Interview	3	5	4	2	1	6
Position	MD	Electronic Engineer	Programme Manager	Change Consultant	Head: Scientific Services	Producer
Industry	Market Research	Mining	Various	Various	Public Sector	Film
Experience of Participant	Articulate, leveraged off previous experience, and focused on the organisation as a system with all its parts inter-dependent.	To the point, tangible and task/delivery orientated. Focused on contractual agreements and project role.	Warm, open and humanistic individual. Soft spoken, thoughtful and deliberate in conversation .	Friendly, natural and inquisitive. Focused on people, emotions, and characters.	Great sense of humour, open and honest. Also a critical thinker and the type of individual that will get to the “bottom” of things.	Insightful and reflective. Focused on the “big picture” and able to see the connection between different parts of a whole.

#### 4.2.2 THE RESEARCHER

As indicated in the previous section, the researcher acknowledges that she, as a consultant herself, had a big impact on this particular research study and the subsequent findings.

The following table summarises the researcher’s ontological and epistemological positions. These were the researcher’s assumptions about what she could know and how she could claim to know it (Schurink, 2009:98), and were used as a framework to elaborate on her overall thinking about the research, the role she played in this research, as well as how she managed the impact of her assumptions, subjective perceptions, and interpretations on the analysis and interpretation of the data, as well as the overall research findings.

**Table 4: Researcher’s ontological and epistemological assumptions, subjective perceptions and interpretations, and overall thinking about the research**

	The researcher believes that:	Research Paradigm, Design, and Methodology	Data Collection: Narratives	Data Collection: Semi-structured Interviews	Analysis of Data
<b>Ontological Position – The researcher’s view, beliefs and perceptions about the nature of reality (Denzin &amp; Lincoln, 2000:108)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the reality of clients and consultants will vary in their experience of the client-consultant relationship and the dimensions that influenced their relationship;</li> <li>this variance is a result of the meaning and understanding they attach to their experiences, their history, as well as the social context within which they are working;</li> <li>reality is socially constructed through lived experience, and in the context of this research, that the client-consultant relationship is therefore not a relationship in itself, but an experienced relationship between two conscious subjects;</li> <li>it is within this relationship that the client and the consultant each construct a Psychological Contract through which they create meaning and understanding, and which will guide their actions and behaviour.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alignment between the researcher’s ontological position and the research paradigm, design, and methodology chosen</li> <li>Paradigm: Social Constructivism</li> <li>Design: Qualitative Research and Exploratory Research</li> <li>Method: Constructivist Grounded Theory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focused on enabling participants to reflect on their “lived experience” of the client-consultant relationship</li> <li>Focused on obtaining data from participants on their various realities</li> <li>Focused on obtaining data on the meaning and understanding that participants attach to their various realities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focused on clarifying and confirming participants’ lived experiences and the meanings, and the understandings attached to those</li> <li>Focused on extracting additional meaning and understanding that the participants attach to their various realities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focused on the meaning and understanding that the participants attached to the client-consultant relationship</li> <li>Considered each participant’s social context and background</li> <li>Considered own social context, background, and meaning attached to reality</li> </ul>
<b>Epistemological Position - Where the researcher</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>it is not possible to produce an objective description of the client-consultant relationship and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alignment between the researcher’s epistemological</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focused towards obtaining an</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigated the “lived experience” of the client-</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Researcher controlled and checked her interpretations (Naïve and Initial Code</li> </ul>

<p>stands in relation to reality as well as the approach to discovering this reality (Denzin &amp; Lincoln, 2000:108)</p>	<p>dimensions that influence that relationship, but an understanding of clients' and consultants' experience and meaning of that relationship can be obtained;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the researcher can achieve knowledge about clients' and consultants' reality by investigating the "lived experience" of their relationship, and by exploring the meanings they attach to that relationship;</li> <li>▪ reality is socially constructed, and knowledge about reality is constituted through lived experience of that reality;</li> <li>▪ it is possible to claim that knowledge about reality as true when the research paradigm, design, and methodology are consistent with the underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions of the researcher;</li> <li>▪ it is possible to claim that knowledge about reality is true when the researcher's frameworks and subjectivity are dealt with throughout the research process and do not compromise the integrity of the achieved knowledge.</li> </ul>	<p>position and the research paradigm, design, and methodology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Paradigm: Social Constructivism</li> <li>▪ Design: Qualitative Research and Exploratory Research</li> <li>▪ Method: Constructivist Grounded Theory</li> <li>▪ Sampling: Non-probability, purposive sampling</li> <li>▪ Data collection: Short, reflective narratives and semi-structured interviews</li> <li>▪ Reflection and interpretative awareness when formalising the research methodology</li> </ul>	<p>understanding of the "lived experience" of the client-consultant relationship (meaning and understanding of participants)</p>	<p>consultant relationship, and further explored the meanings that participants attached to that relationship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Researcher acted as "co-creator" of meaning, and implemented "interpretive awareness" as reflected in personal comments on the semi-structured interview sheet, incorporated into Interview Memos</li> <li>▪ Observational comments on the interview experience were reflected on (Interview Memos)</li> </ul>	<p>Memos)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Systematic analysis of coding for themes (Focused Code Memos)</li> <li>▪ Comparative analysis (Focused Code and Conceptual Category Memo)</li> <li>▪ Personal comments that indicated what choices were made and what the reasons were for these choices (Initial Code, Focused Code, and Conceptual Category Memos)</li> <li>▪ Related literature was consulted in the development of the analysis (Literature Memos)</li> <li>▪ Researcher moved "back and forth" between the different codes at different stages of coding, reflecting on her interpretation and impact on the analysis (Focused Code and Conceptual Category Memos)</li> </ul>
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**Note:** See Appendix A (Naïve Memos, Initial Code Memos, Focused Code Memos, Literature Memos, Conceptual Category Memos and Interview Memos) for more detail on the observational comments, theoretical comments and personal comments referred to in this table.

### 4.3 RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this section, the findings of the research study will be discussed and interpreted. The specific codes, themes, and conceptual categories that emerged from the analysis of the data will be examined, and the literature consulted during this process (as reflected in Chapter 2) will be contextualised. Additional literature reviewed during the process of analysis as new concepts emerged will also be integrated.

The following table provides a final structure of the codes and conceptual categories that emerged from the analysis of the data, as well as the feedback responses and frequencies related to the responses.

**Table 5: Final structure and feedback response frequencies of the codes and categories that emerged from the analysis of the data**

No	Conceptual Category	Code(s)	Total	Total per Category
1	Aspects that will “scope” the nature of the Psychological Contract	Client-consultant required action which will “scope” the nature of the Psychological Contract	15	18
		Effective contracting	3	
2	External factors impacting the client-consultant relationship	External factors causing uncertainty	2	69
		External factors impacting the client-consultant relationship	60	
		Organisation as a system impacting the client-consultant relationship	7	
3	Project scoping, management and governance	Insufficient project scoping, management, and governance	37	45
		Successful project scoping, management, and governance	8	
4	Unwritten dimensions related to the Psychological Contract	Client demand additional work (client expectation)	6	208
		Client expectations not met	5	
		Expectations influencing the client-consultant relationship	28	
		Perceived role	52	
		Perception of being lied to	6	
		Perception of self	34	
		Perception of the client	19	
		Perception of the consultant	3	
		Reciprocal exchange	25	
		Unwritten expectation	29	
5	Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract	Buy-in from the client impacts on the effectiveness of the client-consultant relationship	4	183
		Client’s personal pride (psychological need)	1	

		impacts on the client's expectation of the consultant		
		Client's underlying psychological need – prove right decision was made	1	
		Consultant work ethic	7	
		Faith	1	
		Honesty as factor underlying behaviour	4	
		Integrity	10	
		Intention	3	
		Internal commitment	9	
		Organisation-in-the-mind	20	
		Personal background and frame of reference	3	
		Personal characteristics	26	
		Personal emotions	34	
		Personal values impacting on the client-consultant relationship	12	
		Trust and its relationship to client expectations	5	
		Trust impacting on building the client-consultant relationship	5	
		Trust impacting client and consultant behaviour	5	
		Trust impacting the effectiveness of the client-consultant relationship	11	
		Trust required to meet client's needs	4	
		Trustworthiness	13	
		Underlying factors	5	
6	Unconscious processes	Containment	2	71
		Defence mechanism by group	4	
		Defence mechanism to a particular threat	6	
		Defence mechanism to relief anxiety	2	
		Defence mechanism, assuming the same characteristics in another	14	
		Defence mechanism, justify unacceptable behaviour using reasonable explanations	3	
		Defence mechanism, projection	12	
		Losing interest	3	
		Psychological reaction or "kick-back" due to being "forced"	1	
		Unconscious processes	6	
		Unconscious reactions	18	
<b>Total Responses</b>			<b>593</b>	

The first three categories that emerged from the analysis of the data refer to those aspects, factors, or actions that profoundly influenced and impacted the client-consultant relationship as described by the research participants, but which are not inherently part of that relationship. It is those aspects, factors, or actions that enter into and impact on the client-consultant relationship, as opposed to the last three categories, which refer to dimensions that are individually centred and intrinsically part of that relationship, significantly impacting on the client-consultant relationship, the behaviour within the relationship, and the experience of the relationship.

As such, the first three conceptual categories, (1) Aspects that will “scope” the nature of the Psychological Contract, (2) External factors impacting the client-consultant relationship, and (3) Project scoping, management, and governance, can be seen as explicit dimensions that impact the client-consultant relationship (22.26% of the total responses), with the last three categories, (1) Unwritten dimensions related to the Psychological Contract, (2) Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract, and (3) Unconscious processes, regarded as the implicit dimensions that influence the client-consultant relationship (77.47% of the total responses).

Both the explicit and implicit dimensions will be considered in the exploration of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant, however, in the context of this research study, the main focus will be on the implicit dimensions. The outline provided in Table 5 will be used to structure the discussion of the findings, with graphic representations of the codes and “Code Families” illustrating how the different dimensions fit together and relate to one another.

#### **4.4 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The first three sections below focus on the explicit dimensions impacting the Psychological Contract between client and consultant, indicating the relationship between the explicit and implicit dimensions. The remainder of this Chapter focuses on the implicit dimensions only, with a detailed discussion of the findings, indicating how they fit together and relate to one another.

##### **4.4.1 ASPECTS THAT WILL “SCOPE” THE NATURE OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT**

The first conceptual category identified as “Aspects that will ‘scope’ the nature of the Psychological Contract” consists of two closely related codes: (1) Client-consultant required action that will “scope” the nature of the Psychological Contract and (2) Effective contracting. “Aspects that will ‘scope’ the nature of the Psychological

Contract” furthermore has a significant impact on the other five conceptual categories identified. This interrelatedness can be illustrated as follows:

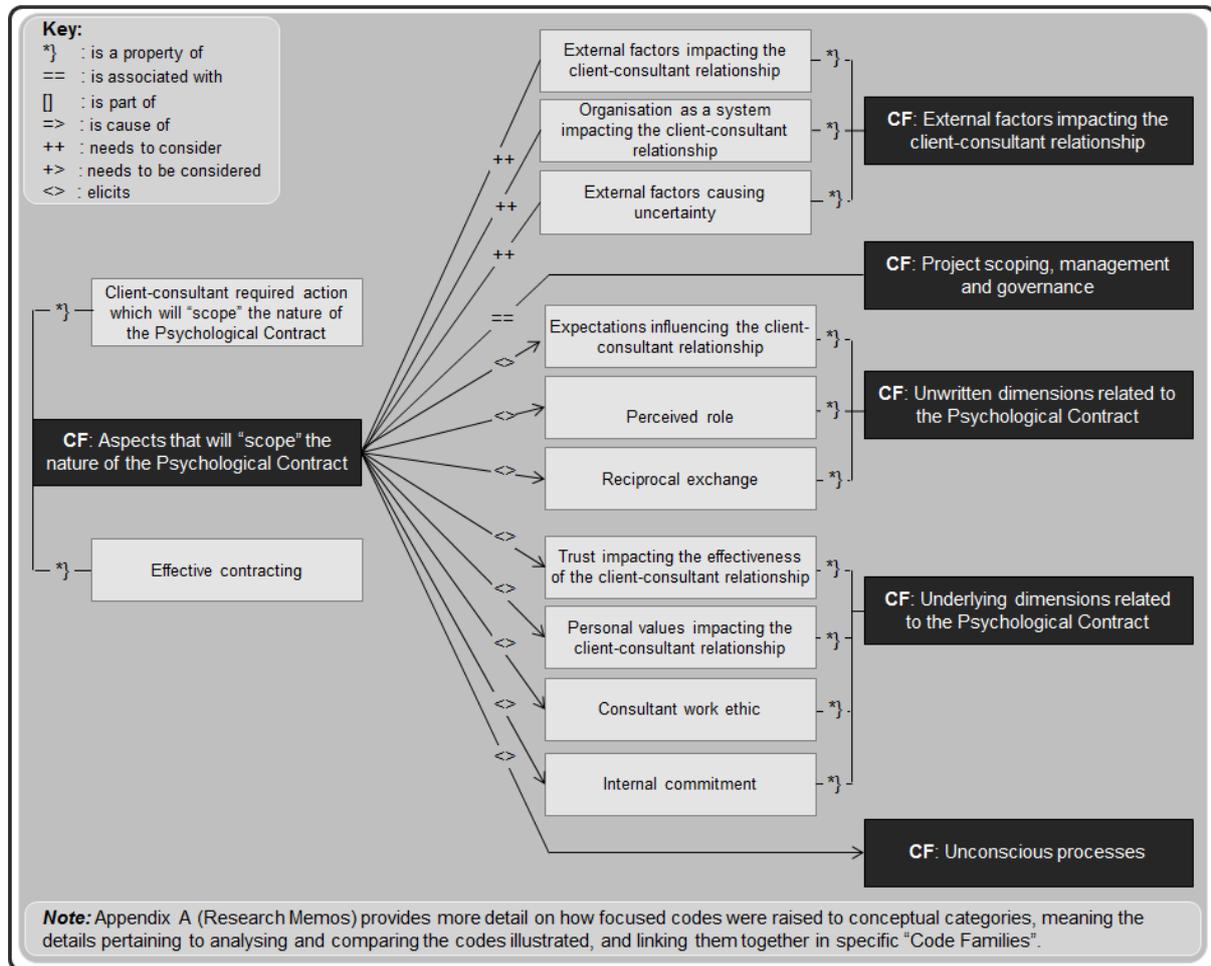


Figure 10: Graphic representation of the interrelatedness of the first conceptual category, its codes, and the other conceptual categories

“Aspects that will “scope” the nature of the Psychological Contract” refer to those aspects or actions that should precede project “kick off” and be conducted throughout the client-consultant engagement, as it will scope the nature of the Psychological Contract and elicit specific unwritten and underlying dimensions, as well as unconscious processes.

To refer back to the definition of the Psychological Contract as adopted from Rousseau (1990:390; 1995:9), the Psychological Contract is the client’s and consultant’s mental beliefs and expectations about their mutual obligations in a contractual relationship, based on the perceptions of both parties of the terms of a

reciprocal exchange. In light of this definition, the first conceptual category relates to the clarification and communication of “mental beliefs and expectations,” “mutual obligations,” “perceptions,” and “reciprocal exchange” etc. before commencement of the project and throughout the project lifecycle to ensure awareness and alignment, and prevent it from negatively impacting the client-consultant relationship in future. This clarification and communication is furthermore typically part of the project stages referred to as *entry* and *contracting*.

The two codes linked to the first conceptual category relate to the actions that should be conducted during a specific stage in the client-consultant engagement to ensure that the Psychological Contract emerging between client and consultant is acknowledged and positively orientated.

Examples of “Client-consultant required action which will “scope” the nature of the Psychological Contract” from the narratives and semi-structured interviews are:

**No.1 (1:2)<sup>1</sup>**

*Participant : Alignment of values is important in building relationships. If this cannot be established early on, the client-consultant relationship will be doomed.*

**No.1 (1:8)**

*Participant : Upholding confidentiality is of the utmost importance for an effective relationship, and the expectation in this regard must be very clear to the consultant. This relates to the extent to which information may be shared within the client organisation too.*

**No.4 (4:84)**

*Participant : We also need to discuss the communication lines.....*

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<sup>1</sup> The reference to “1:2” relates to the location of this specific data extract on the Atlas.ti programme (see disc attached). This allows for the reader to easily access the information in its original form in the electronic version.

**No.5 (5:20)**

*Participant : ....daily explanations and training strengthened the relationship of trust....*

**No.7 (7:24)**

*Participant : .....and ask: “Do I understand you correctly?”.....*

**No.7 (7:38)**

*Participant : When I tried to explain him basic, important things that I know from experience will cause hick-ups if it's not, uh, implemented correctly.*

**No.9 (9:6)**

*Participant : I would want to know that the person that I deal with is gonna give me advice on my business, has the same values, you know.*

**No.12 (12:76)**

*Participant : ..... if I had in my contract with the Production Designer specified just more, in more detail what I expected of her, then it would've made a difference, then there wouldn't have been anxiety, etcetera, etcetera.*

As can be seen from the above examples; aligning values, clarifying expectations, ensuring understanding, establishing communication channels, and sharing expertise, are critical to establishing a successful client-consultant relationship. This is in line with current literature, which relates these types of actions to the entry and contracting stages of the project (Appelbaum and Steed, 2005:75). It is based on this relationship that “Effective contracting” as a code was linked to “Aspects that will “scope” the nature of the Psychological Contract” as a cause of it being done successfully.

As illustrated in figure 10, “Aspects that will “scope” the nature of the Psychological Contract” is also interrelated with the other conceptual categories that emerged from the data analysis.

Firstly, there is an interdependency between “External factors impacting the client-consultant relationship” in that specific external factors should be considered in the “Client-consultant required action which will “scope” the nature of the Psychological Contract.” Some examples of these external factors from the narratives and semi-structured interviews are:

**No.1 (1:16)**

*Participant : Third-party relationships have an impact too.....*

**No.3 (3:2)**

*Participant : There were two other parallel projects being run by HCon.....  
These projects provided input into the monitoring, performance assessment and control systems project.*

**No.3 (3:5)**

*Participant : The project had many challenges not least of all the relative lack of sophistication of the local population (who for instance would open a manhole and drop a whole dead camel into it) to the difficulties in communication with staff largely recruited from Bangladesh and the Philippines.*

**No.4 (4:8)**

*Participant : .....the team dynamics and lack of certain roles and functions.*

**No.5 (5:22)**

*Participant : Also, as the project were being implemented, new possibilities were discovered to enhance operations, which were then included in the implementation.*

**No.6 (6:28)**

*Participant : Her lack of performance jeopardised the artistic integrity of his vision.*

**No.12 (12:21)**

*Participant : So, in our industry especially, it's, your reputation is everything, because the industry is very small.*

Other external factors not included in the examples above are:

- Consultants from other consulting organisations working on the same project;
- Stakeholders in the form of e.g., governments, royal families etc.;
- Stakeholder committees, also referred to as project boards;
- Change in client representation;
- Availability of client;
- Consultant's mentor;
- Consultant's capability and expertise;
- Specific legislative requirements (and standards);
- Increase in project scope;
- Specific project requirements; and
- The nature of the project.

The narratives and semi-structured interviews also indicated a relationship between what was coded “Organisation as a system impacting the client-consultant relationship” (which forms part of the conceptual category “External factors impacting the client-consultant relationship”) and “Effective contracting” and “Client-consultant required action which will “scope” the nature of the Psychological Contract.” This relationship can be seen in the following quotations:

**No.9 (9:4)**

*Participant : Well, the way I see consulting, in terms of adding value to a business, uh, it is important that the consultant further consult and, uh, understands what the business is all about in order to, you know, to give a, an assessment and everything that follows, because, uh... And it's not just the, sort of the, what you see, the structure, the, uh, you know, the environment, etcetera, etcetera. I think that's what I was trying to say in terms of values. It's really about the... What is it that this company really stands for? What is it that they have an objective*

*to achieve? Uh. Is it about all stakeholders? Is it about only the shareholders? Is it about only the employees? Uh. Is it about only the client? You know.*

The organisation as a system with specific characteristics of its own needs to be considered during the phases of entry and contracting, as well as in client-consultant actions such as aligning values, ensuring understanding, and establishing communication channels. This finding is very much aligned with current literature on the organisation as a system. Bullen (2003:4), Miller (1997:190) and Van Tonder (2004:38) assert that the dynamics that arise within the consultant as an independent system and those that arise from the nexus between interactions with the client system require an acute awareness and understanding to ensure successful engagement.

Another code that also forms part of the conceptual category “External factors impacting the client-consultant relationship” was found to have a big impact on the context within which “Effective contracting” needs to occur. Literature states that the stages of entry and contracting often occur in a context characterised by uncertainty (Bullen, 2003:56; Neumann, 1997:10). From the semi-structure interviews, the following example was obtained and coded as “External factors causing uncertainty”:

**No.7 (7:5)**

*Participant : .....the fact that the unknown is so big, or so, so unknown.....created the anxiety, created the question mark.....*

From this example, it is evident that external factors have a big impact on “Aspects that will “scope” the nature of the Psychological Contract,” as it creates uncertainty, which leads to anxiety. Current literature on the topic confirms this, as Bullen (2003:56) and Neumann (1997:10) states that, during the stages of entry and contracting, the client and the consultant will define and take up roles and responsibilities, clarify their expectations, and formalise their relationship, often in a context characterised by uncertainty, risk, and anxiety (Bullen, 2003:56; Neumann, 1997:10).

This context of risk and anxiety elicits unconscious processes in both the client and consultant, creating the link between “Aspects that will “scope” the nature of the Psychological Contract” and the conceptual category referred to as “Unconscious processes” (Bullen, 2003:49). A further example of this is:

**No.12 (12:76)**

*Participant : ..... if I had in my contract with the Production Designer specified just more, in more detail what I expected of her, then it would've made a difference, then there wouldn't have been anxiety, etcetera, etcetera.*

Information from the narratives and semi-structured interviews also relates “Aspects that will “scope” the nature of the Psychological Contract” to the conceptual category “Unwritten dimensions related to the Psychological Contract”, specifically unwritten expectations and perceived roles as seen in the following examples:

**No.7 (7:30)**

*Participant : .....consultant clarifying his, what he understands in terms of requirements and then to the client so that the client, so they both manage the expectations within that relationship.*

**No.11(11:19)**

*Researcher: And within your company, is that role scoped properly within your team and almost...*

*Participant : Ag, I feel so. Uh. Ja. Ag, I, I believe so.*

*Researcher: And, why I'm asking is that, sometimes what happens is, people perceive their role of being A.*

*Participant : Ja.*

*Researcher: And then, the other project team members or the client perceive their role as B. And then there is a clash in that.*

*Participant : Mmmm. [Agreeing]*

Existing literature also reflects this relationship. Neumann (1997:8) and Parks et al. (1998:698) pointed out that it is common for the client and the consultant to fail to clarify their expectations during entry and contracting, which leads to misunderstanding and misconceptions of role definition and misinterpretation of obligations.

Figure 10 also indicates a relationship between “Aspects that will “scope” the nature of the Psychological Contract” and the conceptual category “Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract.” This relationship was evident from the analysis of the data, specifically with regard to trust and personal values, as seen in the following examples:

**No.5 (5:20)**

*Participant : ....daily explanations and training strengthened the relationship of trust....*

**No.9 (9:6)**

*Participant : So, I suppose there's, uh, there's, uh, there's values from a company perspective and values from my own personal perspective. As a director in a business, I would want to believe that I live the company's values and I would want to know that the people that work with me ... in the same way.*

From additional literature on the influence of personal values on the Psychological Contract between client and consultant following the analysis of the data, it emerged that it is critical to obtain clarity on work styles (work ethic), personal attitudes, personal motivations, and expectations during the stage of contracting (Appelbaum & Steed, 2005:75). Neumann (1997:10) takes it a step further and asserts that achieving personal fit between consultants' and clients' values and establishing reciprocal trust and commitment can be regarded as both effective project

preparation and an essential contribution to reducing friction between consultants and clients as the relationship develops over the course of the project.

The last conceptual category associated with “Aspects that will “scope” the nature of the Psychological Contract” is “Project scoping, management, and governance.” Parks et al. (1998:698) emphasise the fact that the client and consultant should create structures to manage and govern their engagement during the contracting phase. The following information from narrative 1 also illustrates this point:

**No.1 (1:1)**

*Participant : A service level agreement between client and consultant typically covers the scope of work; in particular the “project” objectives, a framework of the outcomes expected and delivery timelines. It may sometimes even include financial penalties, should agreed deliverables not be met. Often a contract will include a non-disclosure agreement related to proprietary information.*

To conclude this section, the specific codes and themes that emerged from the analysis of the data, as well as the literature consulted during the literature review and data analysis process positioned “Aspects that will “scope” the nature of the Psychological Contract” as an explicit dimension impacting the Psychological Contract between client and consultant. The findings also emphasised its relationship to other conceptual categories and codes that emerged, and allowed the researcher to identify how they fit together and relate to one another.

In the next section, “External factors impacting the client-consultant relationship” will be discussed as another explicit dimension that impacts the Psychological Contract between client and consultant.

#### 4.4.2 EXTERNAL FACTORS IMPACTING THE CLIENT-CONSULTANT RELATIONSHIP

The second conceptual category identified as “External factors impacting the client-consultant relationship” consists of three closely related codes, (1) External factors impacting the client-consultant relationship, (2) Organisation as a system impacting the client-consultant relationship, and (3) External factors causing uncertainty. “External factors impacting the client-consultant relationship” furthermore has a significant impact on the other five conceptual categories identified. This interrelatedness can be illustrated as follows:

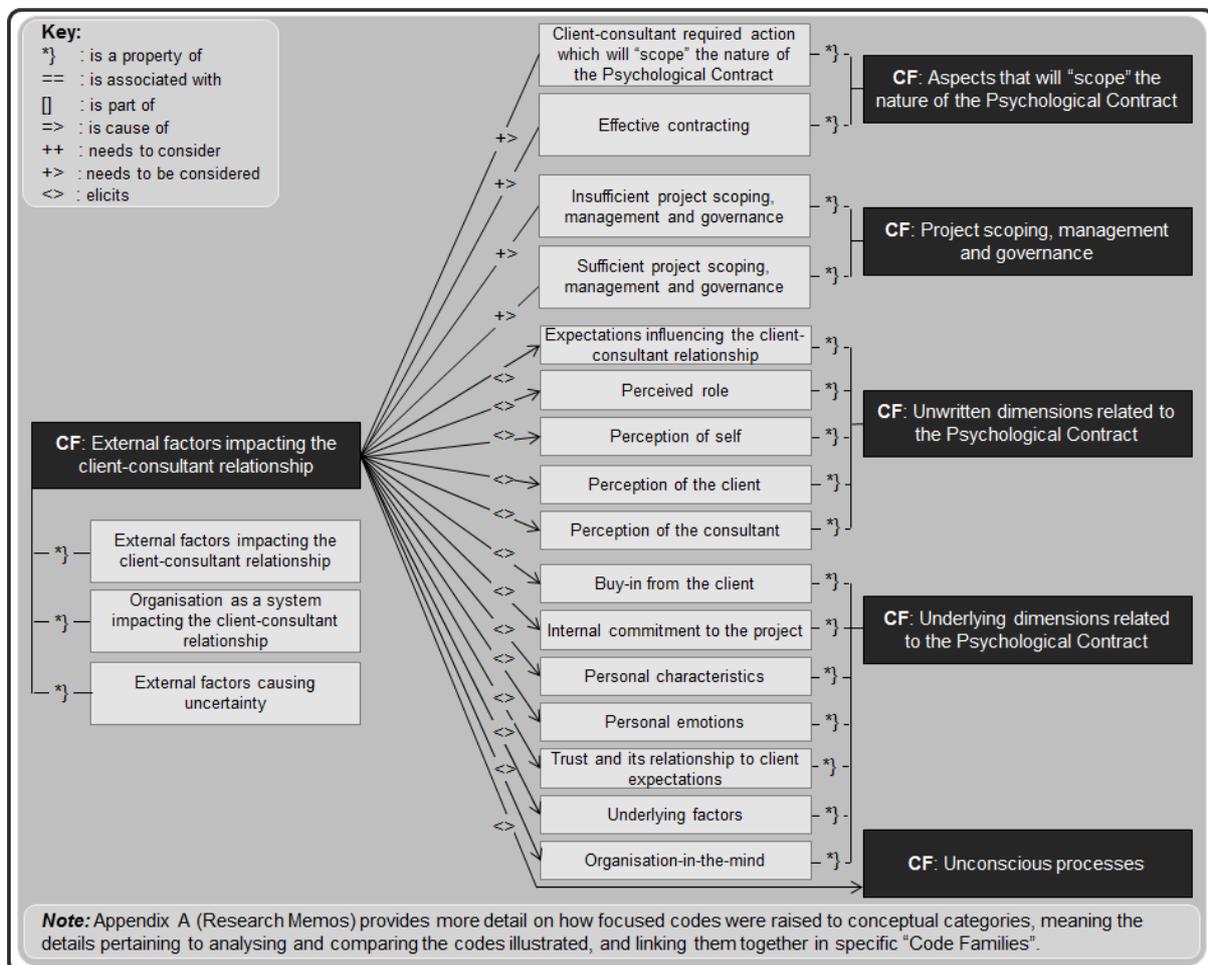


Figure 11: Graphic representation of the interrelatedness of the second conceptual category, its codes, and the other conceptual categories

“External factors impacting the client-consultant relationship” refers to those tangible, as well as those not so tangible factors present in the context of the client-consultant

relationship that should be considered throughout the course of the relationship in terms of its impact on both parties. Most significant about “External factors impacting the client-consultant relationship” is how it elicits specific unwritten and underlying dimensions, as well as unconscious processes within the client-consultant relationship.

Considering the examples and discussion related to this conceptual category in section 4.4.1, it is clear that “External factors impacting the client consultant relationship” should be considered during the stages of entry and contracting, as well as in the specific required client-consultant actions will “scope” the nature of the Psychological Contract. As illustrated in figure 11, “External factors impacting the client consultant relationship” should also be taken into account in any activities related to project scoping, management, and governance in order to ensure that it is performed successfully. The following information from the narratives and semi-structured interviews illustrates this point.

“External factors impacting the client consultant relationship,” such as organisational growth, pressure from clients, legislation, and quality standards and “Insufficient project scoping, management, and governance” are reflected in uncertainty regarding whether the project was, in fact, scoped in line with the client’s needs:

**No.5 (5:16)**

*Participant : Company SS was still experiencing growth and pressure from clients forced by legislation and quality standards to use facilities like ours? Will it be what we asked for? Will what we asked for be what we needed?*

“External factors impacting the client consultant relationship,” such as team dynamics and “Insufficient project scoping, management, and governance,” as seen in lack of role clarity were illustrated in the following quotation:

**No.4 (4:47)**

*Participant : She was quick to criticize everyone and everything, it was the contract*

or lack thereof, the team dynamics and lack of certain roles and functions....

“External factors impacting the client consultant relationship” such as consultant’s capability and expertise, and “Insufficient project scoping, management, and governance” as seen the management of the actual project deliverable:

**No.11 (11:54)**

*Participant : He might, might not have known exactly the, the colouring-in of the solution and the bells and whistles, but he knew what he want, where the consultant actually had to go and draw the actual picture of the project, which he didn’t do. He left it in our hands, and then when we did it, he didn’t like it.*

“External factors impacting the client consultant relationship” such as consultant’s capability and expertise, and “Successful project scoping, management, and governance” as seen the management and governance of the project:

**No.7 (7:20)**

*Participant : Uh, yes and no. I understand what you say, but remember she’s a Master’s student herself, a Master’s graduate herself. So she’s not stupid. Uh. And she knows exactly the workings of our department. So, to leave her had no negative effect. [leave her to manage and govern the project].*

Now that the interrelatedness between conceptual category two and “Aspects that will “scope” the nature of the Psychological Contract” and “Project scoping, management, and governance” have been discussed, the remainder of this section will focus on the impact of “External factors impacting the client consultant relationship” according to the implicit dimensions related to the Psychological Contract between client and consultant.

When exploring the impact that “External factors impacting the client consultant relationship” has on the “Unwritten dimensions related to the Psychological Contract,” several examples emerged from the research data.

“External factors impacting the client consultant relationship,” such as specific project requirements of “Expectations influencing the client-consultant relationship”:

**No.5 (5:7)**

*Participant : The above necessitated management to choose a consultant who can not only deliver the LIMS as per the User Requirement, but also ensure that they fully grasp the workings of the Laboratories and how they interchanged with each other. The Consultant would also be expected to fulfil the requirements of large clients as the system developed.*

“External factors impacting the client consultant relationship,” such as the nature of the industry on “Perceived role”:

**No.12 (12:22)**

*Participant : So, in our industry especially, it's, your reputation is everything, because the industry is very small. So, I usually lay more claim, or, or put more emphasis on things that other Producers won't put emphasis on, like how to work with the team, how to motivate the team, etcetera, uh, you know, the psychological kind of content that I try to give to the production, uh, kind of, how the, how the group operates together, how the team feels, how everyone does their job and see it interact with someone else's job and how they are all, all interlinked.*

“External factors impacting the client consultant relationship,” such as the nature of the project on “Perception of self”:

**No.11 (11:24)**

*Participant : .....whereas the project manager is sitting in an office. So, it is a bit*

*of an inconvenience. And they don't really like it, but that's unfortunately the way construction work. And I'm fully aware of it and I, I prefer it that way.*

“External factors impacting the client consultant relationship,” such as the availability of the client on “Perception of the client”:

**No.4 (4:42)**

*Participant : And then, the problem with Admiral Chatterbox is that he's unreliable, never gets back to you when you have an appointment with him. He's scatterbrained and he's not a good communicator.*

“External factors impacting the client consultant relationship,” such as the specific project requirements on “Perception of the consultant”:

**No.7 (7:26)**

*Participant : As I mentioned, we had two other options. Two other types of options. This option that we took, we had three companies to go for. And, uh, these guys, this guy was the least self-, uh, he was as self-assured as the rest, but he didn't show the overconfidence that, uh, that bothered me with the rest.*

From the narratives and semi-structured interviews it furthermore became apparent that “External factors impacting the client consultant relationship” not only has an impact on the “Unwritten dimensions related to the Psychological Contract,” but also influences the “Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract.” As seen in figure 11, “External factors impacting the client consultant relationship” elicits specific “Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract,” as can be seen in the following quotations:

**No.1 (1:18)**

*Participant : Consider a situation where a client was forced, perhaps by upper management or shareholders, to employ the services of a consultant.*

*Without buy-in from the direct client, such a relationship has no prospect to be productive or effective. The consultant will have to work hard to find a way to build rapport with such a client.*

**No.5 (5:12)**

*Participant : Under normal project management, the Consultant and the Company will be familiar with each other's disciplines. In this case a large grey area existed between the two parties and this is where internal commitment was relied upon. Thus, we relied on the Consultant's commitment to the project, and his willingness to adapt to our discipline.*

“External factors impacting the client consultant relationship,” such as the consultant’s performance on “Personal characteristics” and Personal emotions” and “Trust and its relationship to client expectations”:

**No.6 (6:17)**

*Participant : At the final Pre-Production team meeting, where all the core team members show evidence of their level of preparedness, she was unable to deliver anything. I calmed the director and the rest of the team. Then I had a heart-to-heart with her, during which she promised to deliver during Production. By this stage we were more than worried, but there was nothing left to do than trust her capabilities.*

“External factors impacting the client consultant relationship,” such as specific project requirements and the consultant’s performance on “Underlying factors” such as:

**No.12 (12:8)**

*Participant : The, the sheer size of her contribution to the project made it possible for her to, uh, ja, to have a big impact, uh, not only on the end product and, uh, financially for the company and for the project, but also a big psychological impact, because everyone knew, everyone on the team,*

*uh, from the driver to the Director, everyone knew that this artwork and the apartment was the most important visual aspect in the film.*  
*Meaning that, uh, it was easy for her to, to have a big impact on the psyche of everyone in the project.*

“External factors impacting the client consultant relationship” and “Organisation-in-the-mind”:

**No.12 (12:21)**

*Participant : So, in our industry especially, it's, your reputation is everything, because the industry is very small. So, I usually lay more claim, or, or put more emphasis on things that other Producers won't put emphasis on, like how to work with the team, how to motivate the team, etcetera, uh, you know, the psychological kind of content that I try to give to the production, uh, kind of, how the, how the group operates together, how the team feels, how everyone does their job and see it interact with someone else's job and how they are all, all interlinked.*

Although the code “Organisation-in-the-mind” will be discussed in more detail in the subsequent sections of this chapter, the above provides a good example of how external factors such as the industry impacts on what Hutton et al. (1997:114) describe as the organisation-in-the-mind, “what the individual perceives in his or her head” of how organisational activities and relations are organised, structured, and connected internally.

The impact that “External factors impacting the client consultant relationship” has on “Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract” is embedded in aspects such as the buy-in and commitment required, the type of personal characteristics and emotions that emerge in the relationship, trust and how it impacts expectations in the relationship, as well as the “picture” (organisation-in-the-mind) of how activities and relations are organised, structured and connected internally. This being said, the research provided strong evidence of certain external factors

influencing the underlying psychological factors that drive individual behaviour and beliefs.

Lastly, the interrelatedness between “External factors impacting the client consultant relationship” and “Unconscious processes” should also be noted. As can be seen from the quotations below, “External factors impacting the client consultant relationship” has a significant impact on “Unconscious processes” such as identification, rationalisation, projection, group defence mechanisms, and transference. Current literature supports this finding, and asserts that unconscious individual and organisational processes, generated by the work context (external factors), greatly affect the process and outcome of the consulting relationship (Atkins et al., 1997:147; Bullen, 2003:25-27, Czander & Eisold, 2003:480 and Neumann et al., 1997:111). The following extracts from the narratives and semi-structured interviews illustrate this point.

**No.8 (8:9)**

*Participant : So, I identified more with him, because I felt they were not being nice to him [team dynamics]. So, in a way, I, I think that is maybe a very subjective personal reason I did that, but, on the other hand, I didn't see him as part of that click that worked together, because they excluded him and he excluded himself. So, yes, that makes sense that I identified stronger with him.*

**No.6 (6:9) and (6:37)**

*Participant : During Pre-Production, she habitually failed to represent important deliverables and also failed to show up at important production meetings. She reassured us, however, that it was because she was busy preparing the artwork, which was, after all, the most important visual signifier in the film.....I dismissed the warning signs because I was so impressed with her at the initial interview.*

**No.8 (8:24)**

*Participant : The other team members, the team dynamics... How they operated*

*with each other... Each one of them wanted me to run or drive their personal agenda. And they... That's how they perceived me. [their projections].*

**No.12 (12:6)**

*Participant : Maybe "power" is the wrong word. Uh. I could rather maybe, maybe say her "contribution." Maybe "power" is the wrong word. Uh. The, the sheer size of her contribution to the project made it possible for her to, uh, ja, to have a big impact, uh, not only on the end product and, uh, financially for the company and for the project, but also a big psychological impact.....*

"External factors impacting the client consultant relationship," such as the consultant's performance and "Defence mechanism by group" can be seen in the following quotation:

**No.12 (12:73)**

*Participant : We wanted to believe that she was busy with the artwork and that everything will work out fine, because we didn't want to doubt our choice, our decision that we made in the beginning. We didn't want to doubt ourselves, and we wanted to believe, very strongly wanted to believe that she will do what she promised.*

"External factors impacting the client consultant relationship," such as the consultant's performance and "Unconscious reactions" or transference, can be seen in the following quotation:

**No.1 (1:19)**

*Participant : .....when a third-party recommends the consultant it may assist to establish a strong relationship between client-consultant. On the other hand; if the feedback to the client is negative when the relationship is not yet bonded, the third-party view may adversely affect the productivity of the relationship.*

In the next section, “Project scoping, management, and governance” will be discussed as another explicit dimension that impacts the Psychological Contract between client and consultant.

#### 4.4.3 PROJECT SCOPING, MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE

The third conceptual category, identified as “Project scoping, management, and governance,” consists of two closely related codes, namely (1) Insufficient project scoping, management, and governance, and (2) Sufficient project scoping, management, and governance. Throughout the analysis of the data, it became clear that “Project scoping, management, and governance” had a significant impact on the client-consultant relationship, and also strongly related to the other five conceptual categories. This interrelatedness can be illustrated as follows:

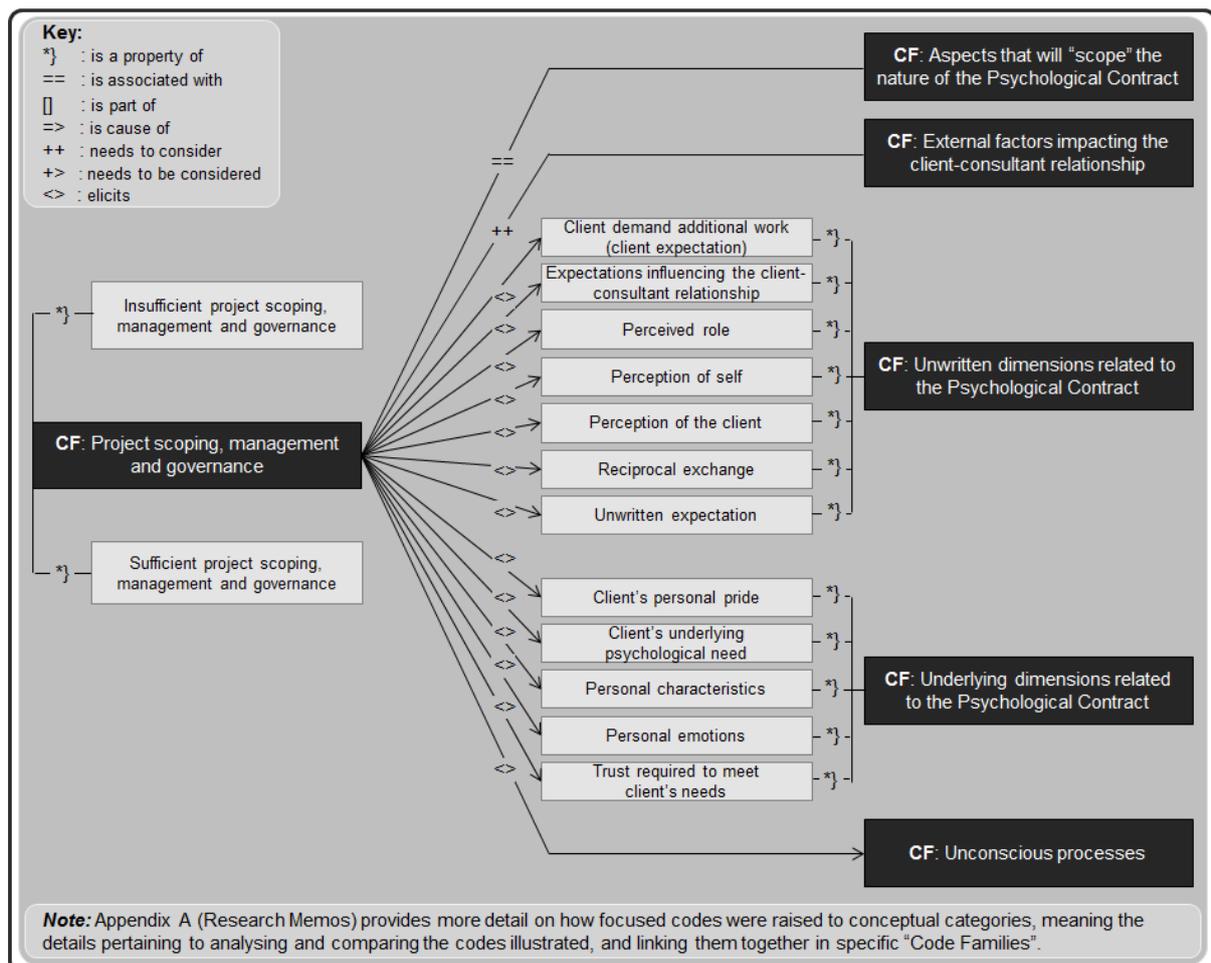


Figure 12: Graphic representation of the interrelatedness of the third conceptual category, its codes, and the other conceptual categories

Sections 4.4.1 and 4.4.2 established the interrelatedness between “Project scoping, management, and governance,” “Aspects that will “scope” the nature of the Psychological Contract,” and “External factors impacting the client consultant relationship.” This section will focus solely on the impact of “Project scoping, management, and governance” on the implicit dimensions pertaining to the Psychological Contract between client and consultant.

As can be seen in the examples provided below, the manner in which the various participant projects had been scoped, managed, and governed, had a significant impact on individual perception and subjective interpretation of the client-consultant relationship (unwritten dimensions), the underlying psychological factors that influenced client-consultant engagement (underlying dimensions), and the unconscious processes that manifested in the client-consultant relationship. The following are examples of the impact of “Project scoping, management, and governance” on unwritten dimensions such as client expectations, perceived role, perception of self, perception of the client, and reciprocal exchange:

“Insufficient project scoping, management and governance” related to “Reciprocal exchange” and “Client demand additional work” as seen in:

**No.2 (2:9)**

*Participant :* *This made the project a very tense environment as the consultant would not always approve of the work demanded extra by the client. Nobody allowed contingency in their budget for this amount of changes which meant that we were asked to do this work at a very minimal rate.*

*The way the client solved this issue was to award us with further projects if we are able to comply with all of the demands of the client. This did eventually happen, but I feel it gave the client more reason to demand additional items to be included.*

“Insufficient project scoping, management, and governance” related to “Expectations influencing the client-consultant relationship” and again to “Reciprocal exchange,” as is evident from the following quotation:

**No.4 (4:59)**

*Participant :* *Regarding Admiral Chatterbox, he feels that he’s expecting too much without a proper contract and also that he’s setting this project up for failure by having a lack of transparency, towards the team and the external consultants, and also a lack of proper planning. Being a result of the lack of transparency, nobody knows what his plan is really. So all in all, we are expected to perform without any structure, with empty promises to us and heavenly promises to the client, and with no real sequential plan.*

“Insufficient project scoping, management and governance” on “Perception of self”, and “Perceived role”:

**No.8 (8:27)**

*Researcher:* *And that is what happens when you have insufficient project scoping, because you get instructions from various different role players, because roles have not been clarified and mandated within the various project charters, documents and those kinds of things.*

*Participant :* *Yes. And that was the first step in our, in our... We... That was the first step we planned whenever the go-ahead started, was to do role clarification to get the, the team working and functioning as a team, but I mean... So, that was... My perceived... The way I perceived myself changed over time. The more I went to meetings and the more I kind of realised that this may not realise, the more I didn’t feel valued there or I felt like it was a waste of time.....and my role is just actually a... ‘n mooi poppie wat net hier sit en niks doen nie...”*

“Insufficient project scoping, management, and governance” and “Perception of the client”:

**No.4 (4:42)**

*Participant : Another issue is the lack of contract. And then, the problem with Admiral Chatterbox is that he’s unreliable, never gets back to you when you have an appointment with him. He’s scatterbrained and he’s not a good communicator. All in all, just confirmation of some of my suspicions.*

“Insufficient project scoping, management and governance” and “Unwritten expectations” as seen in:

**No.8 (8:25)**

*Researcher: So, what you are saying is that, uh, the project governance and the external factors had an impact both on how you perceived your own role and what you expected from the project, as well as, how the other team members perceived your role and what they expected from you.*

*Participant :*

*Yes. Yes.*

The acknowledgement and clarification of “Unwritten expectations” during the stages of entry and contracting, as well as throughout project rollout are critical to ensure successful project implementation (Parks et al.,1998:698). Literature furthermore emphasises the significance of “Unwritten expectations” and “Project scoping, management, and governance” by stating that these expectations evolve over time and continue to act as a boundary guiding individual actions and behaviours within the employment relationship (McFarlane Shore & Tetrick, 1994:96). Semi-structured interview 5 provided an example where “Successful project scoping, management, and governance” helped to clarify “Unwritten expectations,” and emphasises the positive effect it had on successful project delivery:

**No.11 (11:15)**

*Participant : Well, I made it the project manager's problem, you know. I sort of made him understand I'm not happy and, uh, I won't, ja, I can't continue doing these changes forever. Uh. I'm working like incredible hours during the week, and... So, I sort, I sort of made it his problem.*

With regard to the relationship between “Project scoping, management, and governance” and the underlying psychological factors that influence client-consultant engagement (underlying dimensions), the following examples indicate how “Project scoping, management, and governance” elicits specific underlying dimensions that form part of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant:

“Project scoping, management, and governance” related to “Client's personal pride (psychological need) impacts on the client's expectation of the consultant” and “Client's underlying psychological need – prove right decision was made,” which is illustrated in the following quotation:

**No.1 (1:10)**

*Participant : If the client personally appointed the consultant, there will be vested interest on the client's side to prove to the organisation that the right decision was made. The client's personal pride is at stake and the client will expect the consultant to ensure that their reputation is upheld in the eyes of the organisation.*

“Project scoping, management, and governance” related to “Personal characteristics,” as is evident from the following quotation:

**No.4 (4:63)**

*Participant : He's eager to get the job done, and although he's also hindered by the lack of contract, he's positive that it's only a matter of time and he's looking forward to the execution.*

“Project scoping, management, and governance” related to “Personal emotions,” as can be seen in the following extract:

**No.4 (4:2)**

*Participant : During the first meeting, I had an idea of the high level plan and change that needs to be implemented. I was also excited and enthusiastic.*

“Successful project scoping, management, and governance” on “Trust required to meet client’s needs”:

**No.11 (11:37)**

*Participant : So, ja, I think he’s, he’s built some trust with us. I think they’re happy with what we’ve done up until now and it is working and there is, uh, possibilities for them to actually make it easier.*

Apart from the underlying psychological factors (underlying dimensions) discussed in the preceding paragraphs, another set of implicit dimensions influenced by “Project scoping, management, and governance” emerged from the narratives and semi-structured interviews. Literature refers to these “out of awareness” or irrational processes as the unconscious processes (defence mechanisms and unconscious reactions) that play a significant part in work relationships (Atkins et al., 1997:141). The following examples reflect these unconscious processes:

“Project scoping, management, and governance” elicits “Defence mechanism to relieve anxiety” (identification), as can be seen from the following comments:

**No.8 (8:2)**

*Participant : Ja. And the “identify-bility”... I think I could identify with every single person in this group, which made it so much worse for me, because I’m... I knew what they felt, like with the... How frustrating it must be to work two hours a day. The one chick said: “I, I function like two hours a day and wait.” I think it’s so frustrating. And, so, I did identify with that, with that sadness and that struggle.....*

“Project scoping, management, and governance” elicits “Defence mechanism, justify unacceptable behaviour using reasonable explanations” (rationalisation), as is evident from the following quotation:

**No.6 (6:8)**

*Participant : During Pre-Production, she habitually failed to represent important deliverables and also failed to show up at important production meetings. She reassured us, however, that it was because she was busy preparing the artwork, which was, after all, the most important visual signifier in the film.*

“Insufficient project scoping, management, and governance” elicits an unconscious reaction such as “Losing interest,” as seen in the following comment:

**No.2 (2:21)**

*Participant : This put the project margin on a further downward slope. As was expected the sites weren't exactly the same so further Design Changes had to be billed to the client. By this stage of the project our engineers started losing interest in the project.*

From this section, it is quite clear that, as Parks et al. (1998:698) stated, efficient structures need to be put in place to manage and govern the client-consultant engagement, considering its impact on the unwritten and underlying dimensions, as well as unconscious processes related to the Psychological Contract between client and consultant.

In the next section, the implicit dimensions related to the Psychological Contract between client and consultant as it emerged from the research data will be discussed in detail. The literature consulted for the literature review, as well as additional literature reviewed during the process of analysis, will also be integrated.

#### **4.4.4 IMPLICIT DIMENSIONS RELATED TO THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT BETWEEN CLIENT AND CONSULTANT**

Referring back to the research aim and research questions, this section will focus on the implicit dimensions (those intangible aspects that fall beyond the boundaries of the contractual agreement) influencing the client-consultant relationship, as it emerged from the analysis of the research data. The discussion of the implicit dimensions will furthermore indicate how they fit together and relate to one another in order to present a high-level framework of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant.

From the participant data, three conceptual categories emerged that were indicative of the implicit dimensions that influenced the clients' and consultants' Psychological Contracts, or as Rousseau (1990:390; 1995:9) stated, the mental beliefs and expectations about their mutual obligations in a contractual relationship, based on the perceptions of both parties on the terms of a reciprocal exchange.

From the onset of focused coding upon sorting, comparing, and synthesising the initial codes, three distinct themes emerged. The first theme related to the clients' and consultants' perceptions and subjective interpretations of themselves, their relationships and the events that occurred in their relationships, as well as their specific expectations regarding the other party to the relationship, the actual relationship, and outcomes of the relationship. The second theme pertained to those subjective, psychological factors that define how one evaluates specific events and determine how one will act in specific relationships. The last theme identified related to those "out of awareness," subconscious processes that influence individuals as subjective beings. Based on the premises of these three themes, the various different codes were connected and linked to one another.

During the process where existent research on the Psychological Contract were adopted into the analysis, it became apparent that the themes identified were very much aligned with the implicit dimensions identified from the literature review, referred to as "unwritten dimensions related to the Psychological Contract,"

“underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract,” and “unconscious processes” influencing the Psychological Contract. The table below provides a description of each of these:

**Table 6: Summary of the implicit dimensions identified from literature**

	Description
<b>Unwritten dimensions related to the Psychological Contract</b>	Those aspects that result from individual perception and subjective interpretation, such as perceived role definition, belief of reciprocal mutuality, and unwritten expectations.
<b>Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract</b>	The underlying psychological factors that drive individual behaviour and the belief of it resulting in beneficial effects such as trust and internal commitment.
<b>Unconscious processes influencing the Psychological Contract</b>	Those unconscious processes that govern our “perceptual systems,” influence our beliefs and expectations, and affect our behaviour, such as defence mechanisms to avoid anxiety and unconscious reactions (transference and counter-transference).

The codes and themes from the research were raised to conceptualise categories, and were defined in line with literature as “Unwritten dimensions related to the Psychological Contract,” “Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract,” and “Unconscious processes.”

Although some changes were made to codes during the subsequent analysis of the narratives and semi-structured interviews (i.e. new codes were created, codes were consolidated, some codes were identified as redundant, and some were added and removed from conceptual categories), the three conceptual categories that represent the implicit dimensions related to the Psychological Contract between client and consultant did not change (table 5 presents the three conceptual categories with the specific codes related to each).

What did, however, become apparent from the analysis is the absolute interrelatedness of the three categories, the “thin line” between the categories, and the interchangeable impact the categories have on each other and the Psychological Contract between client and consultant. Based on this, the discussion of the implicit dimensions will firstly position each of the conceptual categories and their related codes, and then focus on how they fit together and relate to one another (section 4.4.5).

#### 4.4.4.1 Unwritten dimensions related to the Psychological Contract

As a starting point, the frequency of responses indicated that “Unwritten dimensions related to the Psychological Contract” was the biggest influencing factor on the Psychological Contract between client and consultant (34.91% of the total responses). Within this conceptual category, “Perceived role” appeared most frequently (25.12% of the responses in the category “Unwritten dimensions related to the Psychological Contract”). “Perceived role” pertains to what the individual believes he or she has agreed to; the image or idea created by interpreting what their role means, which will determine their behaviour (Rousseau, 1995:18-19). The following examples from the narratives and semi-structured interviews illustrate this point:

##### **No.10 (10:34)**

*Participant : .....the success of a project has not to do with any one person’s ego or any one person’s ability. Uh. Good project management is the extent to which you can be a catalyst...*

*Researcher: Yes.*

*Participant : ...to bring, to bring people together....*

##### **No.11 (11:16)**

*Participant : Participant: Ja, well, I, you know, I, I, I can’t confront the, the client. I’m just the engineer. I’m not responsible for the client’s... Well, I am respons-... Well, I’m, I’m part of it, but I’m not the first line of defence with the client. So, that’s what I felt, is, is take it to the next level.*

##### **No.12 (12:46)**

*Participant : You know, if she was the Producer and I was in that position, I would’ve gone to her and said: “You know what, I’m struggling. This is what...” And put everything on the table, cause you can’t deal with something if it’s not on the table.*

From these examples, it is quite clear that the participants each had perceptions of their role beyond that which was specified, i.e. a Project Manager is also a “catalyst,” an Engineer is “not the first line of defence with the client,” and a Producer is also someone who puts “everything on the table.” These perceptions lead to them behaving in a certain manner, and, as literature states, will also shape their expectations and beliefs in reciprocal mutuality (Parks et al., 1998:718; Soon Ang & Straub, 2004:357-358). The following are examples from the participant data that indicate the link between “Perceived role,” “Expectations influencing the client-consultant relationship,” and “Reciprocal exchange”:

**No.6 (6:4; 6:5 & 6:7)**

*Participant :* The director and I decided there and then that she would not only consult on the production, but oversee all implementation pertaining to the look and feel of the production. In other words, she was made part of the core production team from the commencement of the Pre-Production stage. As a result of her impressive CV and showreel, both the director and I felt confident in her capabilities. We both had high expectations of her. Because of her expertise, I agreed to compensate her with remuneration that was well above industry standards.

**No.4 (4:20)**

*Participant :* He asked me that he needs guidance with the task team, that he feels that they need to be professional, they need to be solution-driven and enthusiastic and that I should also tell him if he’s doing anything wrong. I now understood the first, and probably most important thing for the moment, I must work in the internal dynamics of the team as well as the image they are portraying to the client.

From the above examples, it is clear that there is a definite link between “Perceived role,” “Expectations influencing the client-consultant relationship,” and “Reciprocal exchange” as codes related to the conceptual category “Unwritten dimensions

related to the Psychological Contract.” Also, contrary to existing literature which states that an individual’s perception will shape their expectations (Parks et al., 1998:718), the findings indicate that there is an interchangeable impact between expectations and “Perceived role.”

The analysis of the participant data furthermore revealed a specific “duality” in the concept *expectation*. On the one hand, there are certain expectations that coincide with a specific role, but are not necessarily agreed upon during the contracting phase. These may be verbalised during the course of the client-consultant relationship and are usually quite explicit. On the other hand, there are certain expectations that are unwritten, not verbalised, and are a cause of individual perceptions, psychological factors, or unconscious processes. Based on this “duality,” two different codes were created, namely “Expectations influencing the client consultant relationship” as can be seen in the following quotation:

**No.4 (4:6)**

*Participant :* *Then he started asking for results, telling the team that he expects all of us to be innovative and creative, solution-driven.*

and “Unwritten expectation,” as can be seen in the following quotation:

**No.7 (7:64)**

*Participant :* *The main intention for us all is to make money. And normally there’s a clash, because the client doesn’t want, wants everything for free and he wants the most money out of this.*

It is quite clear that both “Expectations influencing the client consultant relationship” and “Unwritten expectation” can potentially have a big impact on the Psychological Contract between client and consultant. Another dimension closely related to these two codes is “Reciprocal exchange.” Reciprocal exchange refers to the belief that one party will reciprocate the behaviours of the other in one way or another (Turnley et al., 2003:190). “Reciprocal exchange” was included in the “Unwritten dimensions related to the Psychological Contract” since it relates to individuals’ perceptions and

subjective understanding of explicit and implicit promises regarding their contributions, which influences their expectations and forms the basis of their efforts and behaviour (Cullinane & Dundon, 2006:116; Rousseau, 1995:6-10). The following examples from the participant data illustrate this point:

**No.2 (2:11)**

*Participant :* *The way the client/consultant solved this issue was to award us with further projects if we are able to comply with all of the demands of the client.*

**No.6 (6:39)**

*Participant :* *I also expected her to deliver in line with what she was getting paid. Even if she had less experience than she claimed, I expected her to at least then compensate by having internal integrity and commitment.*

**No.11 (11:52)**

*Participant :* *And also, the sooner you get it finished, the sooner you can start with something new, interesting.*

From the last example, it is quite evident that reciprocal exchange does not only pertain to explicit or implicit promises from the other party, but that it also involves certain “individual inducements” or, as Parks et al. (1998:711) assert, “socio-emotional rewards.”

Other closely related codes linked to the conceptual category “Unwritten dimensions related to the Psychological Contract” can be seen in the following examples:

“Perception of self”:

**No.4 (4:98)**

*Participant :* *My mandate is stripped from me and I have no way of managing risk, being proactive or facilitating the present! I cannot manage the team or the dynamics thereof. I have no access to, or knowledge of the*

*policies and practices being written, nor may I have, and I have no idea when this will change! To top everything, I'm someone who feels that I shouldn't waste energy on these things. I can only be polite, be nice, be friendly, be helpful. Be all that I can be, I guess, until it sorts itself out!*

**No.7 (7:36)**

*Participant : And, uh, I normally kick up a big storm if I don't like things, so I did that again and the next thing the directors join me and then we all sit around the table and.....*

“Perception of the client”:

**No.10 (10:3)**

*Participant : And his name was SK and he was a, he was actually an Iranian, but he'd been, he was settled to now become a UAE national. So, in every way in his outward appearance, he, he looked like any other UAE citizen, but he was to some extent, being, being Iranian, marginalised from the society in which he was based, which meant that he was very sensitive to cultural, uh, nuances and, also, typical to the Arabs generally, very, uh, emotional in a sense. They don't deal in, uh, in facts to the same extent as they do in feelings. Now, that meant that I always had at least one person who was the, the head of the client, that, no matter what went on, I could go and talk to him.*

**No.11 (11:28)**

*Participant : .....cause you do get clients that try and get information out of you, which they will throw back at you at a, at a stage.*

“Perception of the consultant”:

**No.7 (7:23)**

*Participant : .....this guy was the least self-, uh, he was as self-assured as the rest,*

*but he didn't show the overconfidence that, uh, that bothered me with the rest. The sort of attitude: "Don't worry, we'll fix it." From this guy we could, from the onset realised that if he's not sure, he'll ask.*

"Perception of being lied to":

**No.8 (8:43 & 8:44)**

*Participant : But I didn't know that would be the result at all. So, the moment I realised that... It's as if these people lied to me, to my face.*

*Researcher: Why did... Why did you have that thought: It was like these people lied to me, to my face?*

*Participant : ..... I think it's maybe based on the way I grew up or my personal value system or whatever, but I, when I say I'm gonna do something, I do it. And I'd rather not commit than commit and lie about it.*

It is clear from these examples that each of the dimensions or codes presented has a significant impact on the client-consultant relationship and Psychological Contract between client and consultant, or, as Soon Ang and Straub (2004:357-359) postulated, it is these individual perceptions that embody the Psychological Contract between client and consultant. The examples furthermore indicated the interrelatedness of the dimensions, i.e. between "Perception of self" and "Perceived role" [No.4 (4:98)], between "Perceived role," "Perception of the client," and "Reciprocal exchange" [No.11 (11:28)], and between "Perception of the consultant" and "Perception of self" [No.7 (7:23)]. Lastly, the examples illustrated how these dimensions impact other dimensions in the category "Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract," i.e. "Perception of self" and "Personal characteristics" [No.4 (4:98)], "Perception of the consultant" and "Personal characteristics" [No.7 (7:23)], and "Perception of being lied to" and "Personal background and frame of reference" [No.8 (8:43 & 8:44)], which will be discussed in more detail in the remainder of this Chapter.

To conclude this section, the interrelatedness of the codes in the conceptual category “Unwritten dimensions pertaining to the Psychological Contract” can be illustrated as follows:

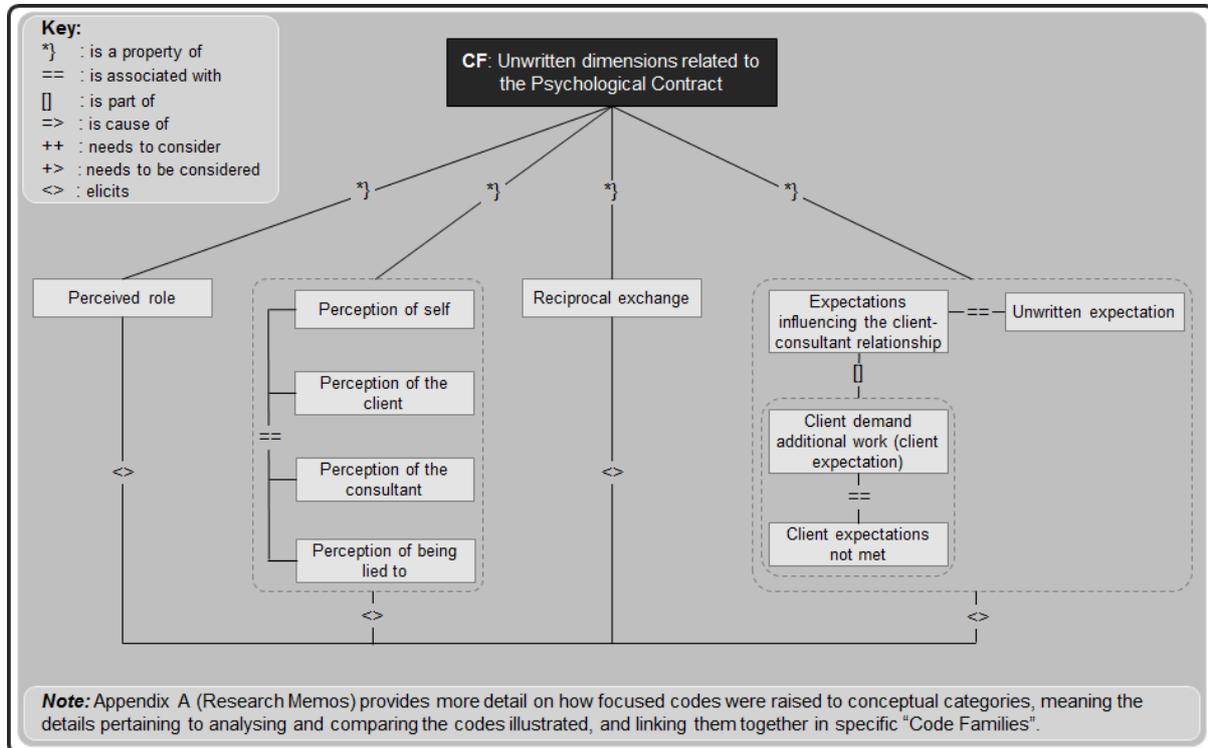


Figure 13: Graphic representation of “Unwritten dimensions related to the Psychological Contract” and its related codes

In the next section, “Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract” as a conceptual category of implicit dimensions that impact the Psychological Contract between client and consultant will be discussed.

#### 4.4.4.2 Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract

“Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract” refers to those subjective, psychological factors that define how one evaluates specific events and determine how one will act in specific relationships. In the literature, “Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological contract” is described as the underlying psychological factors that drive individual behaviour and the belief that it will result in a beneficial effect (Kadefors, 2004:176; Rousseau et al., 1998:395).

From the semi-structured interview data, however, it became apparent that the belief that it will result in a beneficial effect” was not evident, but instead that the belief relates to what either the client or the consultant believes the relationship requires to be successful. “Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract” refer to the underlying psychological factors that drive individual behaviour and the belief of what the client-consultant relationship requires to be successful. “Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract” involved of 30.86% of the overall responses.

Referring to table 5, the following are examples from the narratives and semi-structured interviews of the codes related to the conceptual category “Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract.”

“Buy-in from the client impacts on the effectiveness of the client-consultant relationship:

**No.1 (1:18)**

*Participant : Without buy-in from the direct client, such a relationship has no prospect to be productive or effective.*

“Internal commitment”:

**No.7 (7:11)**

*Participant : She took complete ownership and full responsibility until the system was rolled out.*

**No.5 (5:12)**

*Participant : In this case a large grey area existed between the two parties and this is where internal commitment was relied upon. Thus, we relied on the Consultant’s commitment to the project, and his willingness to adapt to our discipline.*

From these examples, it is clear that, as Bueno and Jamieson (2010:6) stated, buy-in, ownership, and commitment are crucial for effective client-consultant engagement and work to progress.

Other literature on internal commitment (Parks et al., 2004:712) asserts that internal commitment refers to the concepts of client identification, psychological ownership, and a spirit of team play, which are needed to achieve success. Internal commitment as reflected in the research data furthermore also refers to the degree to which individuals feel emotionally attached to the project, which will govern the productivity of the individual in the client-consultant relationship (Sels et al., 2004:472).

From the last example, it is evident that internal commitment can be an expectation, therefore relating to “Unwritten dimensions pertaining to the Psychological Contract.” This finding is very much aligned with the research of Martin et al. (2001:144), who found that internal commitment relates to unwritten expectations in that internal commitment can be significantly influenced by expectation gaps.

A second set of psychological factors impacting the client-consultant relationship were identified in the participant data and coded as “Client’s personal pride (psychological need) impacts on the client’s expectation of the consultant” and “Client’s underlying psychological need – prove right decision was made.” The following is an example from the narratives:

**No.1 (1:10)**

*Participant : The client’s personal pride is at stake and the client will expect the consultant to ensure that their reputation is upheld in the eyes of the organisation.*

This example again indicates a relationship between psychological factors such as “Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract” and “Unwritten expectation,” which form part of the conceptual category “Unwritten dimensions related to the Psychological Contract.”

The next part of the discussion on “Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract” pertains to several interrelated and interdependent codes. From the participant data, it became evident that trust plays a significant role in client-consultant engagement from the phase of building the client-consultant relationship to overall client-consultant behaviour and the effectiveness of the client-consultant relationship. According to literature, trust is a psychological state that influences the nature of the Psychological Contract (Kadefors, 2004:176; Rousseau et al., 1998:395) and causes client-consultant engagement to extend beyond mere adherence to the legal contract (Soon Ang & Straub, 2004:358).

From the narrative and semi-structured interview data, it also became apparent that certain other psychological factors, such as faith, honesty, integrity, good intentions, and favoured personal values need to be present for the establishment of mutual trust. The following graph illustrates how these dimensions fit together and relate to each other:

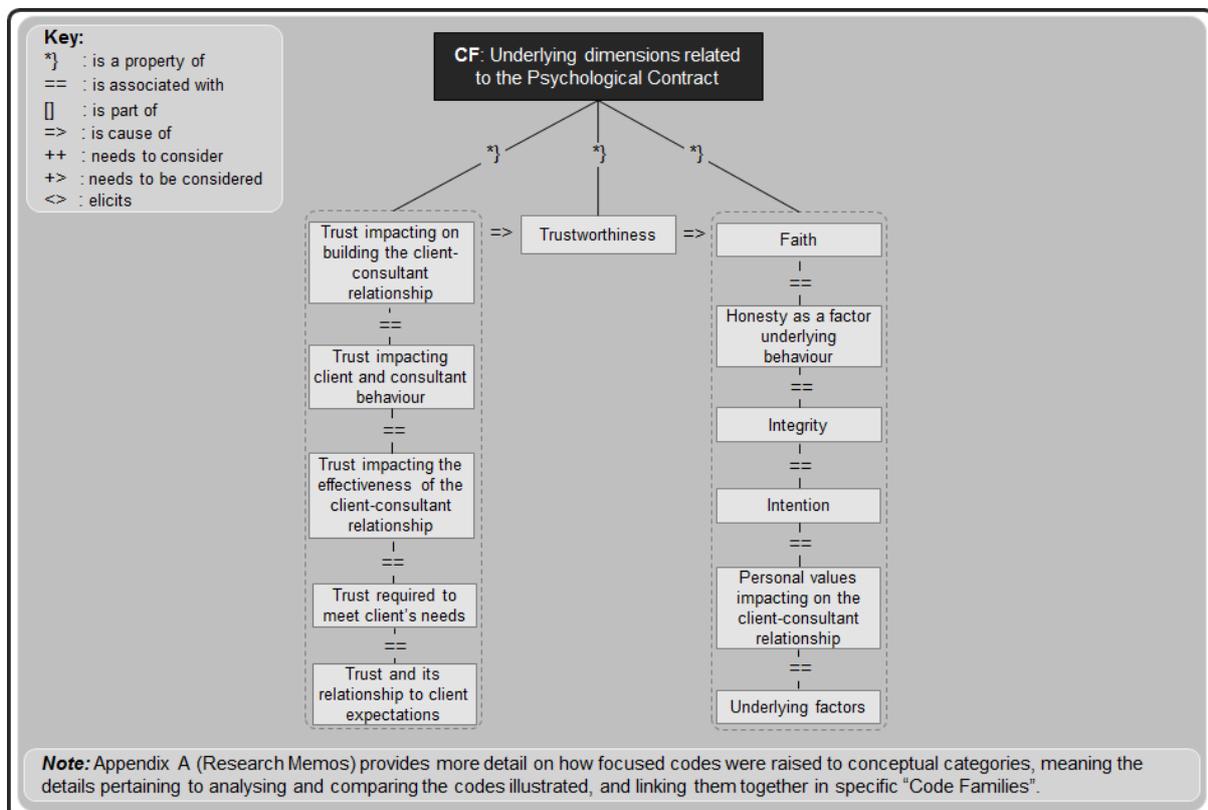


Figure 14: Graphic representation of trust, trustworthiness, and other psychological factors that need to be in place

As can be seen in figure 14, codes pertaining to trust, trustworthiness as a code, and codes reflecting various individual psychological factors were found to be interrelated. Although various relationships between these codes emerged from the participant data, each of them also independently relates or “is a property of” “Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract” since they drive individual behaviour and the belief of what the client-consultant relationship requires to be successful. The following are examples from the narrative and semi-structured interview data, starting with the associated codes related to trust:

“Trust impacting on building the client-consultant relationship” and “Trustworthiness” as a requirement for trust to be established:

**No.1 (1:3)**

*Participant :* Trust is an important element in any relationship; business or personal. At the inception of a business relationship, the client has little proof that the consultant is trustworthy and capable. Until trust is earned by the consultant, the client will typically rely completely on the contract to manage the outcomes expected.

Trust as a cause of “Trustworthiness”

**No.7 (7:44 & 7:45)**

*Participant :* .....trustworthiness, number one, if you don't trust me, it means that I'm not trustworthy.....You must be worthy of my trust. It's not...it is my trust, but trustworthiness is on your side.

“Trust impacting on building the client-consultant relationship” and “Trust impacting the effectiveness of the client-consultant relationship”:

**No.7 (7:50 & 7:51)**

*Participant :* But the relationship is based on trust. If you don't have trust you can't go a step further.

“Trust impacting the effectiveness of the client-consultant relationship” and “Perceived role” as an unwritten dimension:

**No.8 (8:30 & 8:31)**

*Participant :* *the fact is I had a trust that this thing... I was very positive that this was gonna work out. So, the moment that that trust was... When I realised that this might not happen, that's when the trust broke. When the trust broke, I started to see myself in a different light. I started to say: “Oh, but my role at this stage is just to be here to show that there might be a Change Manager to keep their hopes up so that...” So, I was... I perceived myself then as a little cover-up.*

“Trust impacting client and consultant behaviour”

**No.9 (9:9 & 9:10)**

*Participant :* *For instance, trust is really important to me. So, if, if trust was to be broken, then I wouldn't take anything that, that a consultant say seriously. Uh. I wouldn't want them to be part of the team or to influence the future of the business at all.*

“Trust required to meet client's needs” and “Trust impacting the effectiveness of the client-consultant relationship”:

**No.1 (1:4 & 1:5)**

*Participant :* *Without a trust relationship, it may also be very difficult for the consultant to meet the client's needs. Crucial information may be withheld; which will negatively impact on the effectiveness of the relationship.*

“Trust and its relationship to client expectations,” with client expectations in fact being an “Unwritten dimensions related to the Psychological Contract”:

**No.11 (11:35)**

*Participant : Oh, I believe the, the client trust us fully, because up until now we've met all his expectations.*

From these examples, it is clear that, as Kaderfors (2004:176) stated, if trust is present, people can spontaneously engage in constructive interaction, share information, and make decisions without pondering who is formally responsible for problems and who is going to be held accountable. Trust is vital for bringing about farther-reaching cooperative processes, and the more interdependency there is between individuals, the more trust is required in order to achieve a productive working relationship.

The abovementioned examples also indicated that trust is a cause of the perception of the other person as a trustworthy individual. This relationship was further investigated in the semi-structured interviews in order to determine what it is that makes an individual regard another as trustworthy, and to explore those implicit dimensions that so greatly impact on the Psychological Contract between client and consultant. As seen in figure 14, this investigation and subsequent analysis of the participant data indicated that faith, honesty, integrity, intention, and personal values play a significant role. The following examples present the relationship between the factors *trustworthiness* and *trust*.

“Faith” and “Trust impacting on client and consultant behaviour”:

**No.6 (6:10 & 6:36)**

*Participant : We trusted her simply because of her impressive CV and showreel.....In hindsight, I know that I put too much faith in her capabilities. I dismissed the warning signs because I was so impressed with her at the initial interview.*

Buono and Jamieson (2010:12) refer to faith as the belief in the trustworthiness of a person, concept, or entity. From the example above it can be seen that the

participant had faith in the consultant's capabilities based on the initial interview, and therefore regarded her as trustworthy, which resulted in the establishment of trust. Although in the broader context of the narrative and semi-structure interview there were also other implicit dimensions impacting the situation, i.e. "Perceived role," "Personal emotions," etc., a clear link between faith and trust could be established. The narrative and semi-structured interview data also established a link between personal values, honesty, integrity, and trust. The following examples illustrate this relationship:

**No.9 (9:19 & 9:24)**

*Participant : And if, if values are very strong, for instance, if, if it's strongly, uh, leaning towards honesty, integrity, etcetera.....*

*And I don't know if you want me to go into what, what important values are for me, but I think they, they're quite general in terms of my belief of, uh, fair and equitable business. That's probably, as I say, trust.....*

**No.9 (9:23)**

*Participant : I think, honesty would be the, the make or break factor really, uh, [laughs] for me, if I had to think about any relationship. Uh. For instance, if you made a promise to do something and you're not able to deliver on it, but you're not honest about it, then the trust would be broken.*

**No.12 (12:64 & 12:65)**

*Participant : 'Cause I'm just thinking that I put trust in someone based on what I perceive their integrity to be.....*

When consulting existing literature on personal values, honesty, and integrity, Kadefors (2004:179) found that shared personal values between client and consultant can be linked to interpersonal trust, and are required for establishing effective client-consultant relationships. She also refers to integrity in the project environment, and states that a person will be regarded as trustworthy should he or

she adhere to a set of principles (i.e. honesty and openness) that the person perceives as being part of individual integrity (Kadefors, 2004:177). Barnard et al. (2008:40-48) also positioned integrity as a psychological construct impacting workplace behaviour, and found it to be a principal determinant of trust.

Apart from faith, personal values, honesty, and integrity, the participant data also indicated “Intention” and other “Underlying factors” as determinants of trust. The following examples illustrate this point:

“Intention” and “Trustworthiness”:

**No.7 (7:55 & 7:56)**

*Participant :* *I can't trust myself, so I can't trust you a hundred percent, because there is a margin of error. But, if you don't deliberately...If your intentions...I've got two business principles, common sense and attitude. So, if your intentions are good and you use your common sense, the mistakes you will make will be, what I call... My people know that I talk about that. I call it a bone fide mistake. And that's easily forgiven, especially if you come out of it. But if we have to send the forensic team in to try to discover your mistakes, that's where trust goes.*

The effect of “Underlying factors” such as passion and respect on trust and “Internal commitment”:

**No.9 (9:27 & 9:28)**

*Researcher:* *Uh. M, I couldn't help but think just now when we talked about honesty that our first bit of the conversation about values (integrity, passion, all those kind of things)...*

*Participant :* *Yes.*

*Researcher:* *So, something that happened in my thoughts just now is I almost see*

*all of that (honesty, passion, integrity) almost as the key to switch and switch off, switch on and switch off trust.*

*Participant : Ja. You're right. Ja. I agree.*

*Researcher: So, it's almost, it is the boiling pot to, to have that.*

*Participant : Yes. Absolutely. Absolutely.*

*Researcher: Okay. Okay. And then you also refer to respect, uh, in this.*

*Participant : Mmmm [Agreeing]*

*Researcher: Saying that trust and respect... If trust... Without trust and respect the relationship will be broken down. And...*

*Participant : And maybe with respect again that commitment to the client's objective, uh, again through, uh, behaviour and, uh, you know, uh, respect in a sense of... I suppose I would, I would also equate dishonesty as being disrespectful, you know. So, ja, I think they're all interlinked.*

When looking at the two examples provided, it is clear that both of these codes relate to individual types of meaning attached to certain behaviours or events, with a positive meaning translating into the other individual being regarded as trustworthy. Rousseau et al. (1998:395), Kaderfors (2004:176), and Sels et al. (2004:472) explained that trust as a psychological state is in part comprised of positive interpretations of the intentions or behaviours of others, and the belief that the individual will be treated fairly and with respect. From this it is clear that the individual's interpretation of the other's intentions, passion, and respect will greatly influence the Psychological Contract between the two parties.

From the narrative and semi-structured interview data, four other dimensions proved to be associated with the psychological factors that drive individual behaviour and the belief of what the client-consultant relationship requires to be successful. These codes as properties of “Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract” are (1) “Consultant work ethic,” (2) “Personal background and frame of reference,” (3) “Personal characteristics,” and (4) “Personal emotions.” From the analysis of the research data, it became evident that these had a direct impact on all the other implicit dimensions identified, and proved to have a significant impact on the participants’ client-consultant relationships. The following examples illustrate the codes and their various relationships:

“Consultant work ethic”:

**No.9 (9:17)**

*Participant :* .....say, for instance, if a person continuously misses appointments etcetera, you know, then you would start asking, well, do they really take my business seriously? Do they really take what we’re achieving here seriously?

“Consultant work ethic” differentiated from the perception of the consultant’s “Integrity”:

**No.12 (12:37 & 12:38 & 12:67)**

*Participant :* I would just like to distinguish between what she delivered, which to me is a sign of her lack of work ethic, and then the fact that, that she hid stuff and that she didn’t come to me. I see that more as a part of her integrity.

.....but that integrity is in work ethic, in other words, it plays a part and your work ethic is motivated by your integrity. So, the two are very much interrelated.

“Personal emotions” and “Consultant work ethic”:

**No.6 (6:32 & 6:33)**

*Participant :* The production period became a psychological nightmare, with the director and I demotivated by her low standards.

“Personal emotions” and “Personal characteristics”:

**No.4 (4:100 & 4:101)**

*Participant :* I was dazed and confused, but, ever professional, just stared at him with a big smile.

The consultant’s performance, “Expectations influencing the client-consultant relationship,” and “Personal emotions”:

**No.6 (6:25 & 6:26)**

*Participant :* Her deliverable did not nearly measure up to my expectations of her. I was distraught.

“Personal characteristics” as seen in the client’s reaction to a request from the consultant for him to visit various project sites in Western clothes:

**No.10 (10:32)**

*Participant :* And all the way to the, the different sights he was, he was moaning and complaining and: “I’ll never allow someone to do this to me.” But in a kind of light-hearted way. And, uh, and the response from the people, the Bangla..., from the staff themselves was absolutely amazing. I mean, from that day onwards, whether he was driving his car in the street or he was walking, uh, to his office, he would, all of these people just greeted him instantly. You know, they were overwhelmed that he had actually bothered.

“Personal background and frame of reference,” “Personal values impacting the client-consultant relationship,” “Perception of self,” “Perception of being lied to,” and “Integrity”:

**No.8 (8:45 to 8:50)**

*Participant :* I think it's maybe based on the way I grew up or my personal value system or whatever, but I, when I say I'm gonna do something, I do it. And I'd rather not commit that commit and lie about it. So, I think it really just comes from my personal background and frame of, frame of reference. And just that emotional integrity that was instilled in me.

Given the relationships discussed and examples provided in this section on “Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract,” the following graph illustrates how the dimensions pertaining to this conceptual category fit together and relate to one another:

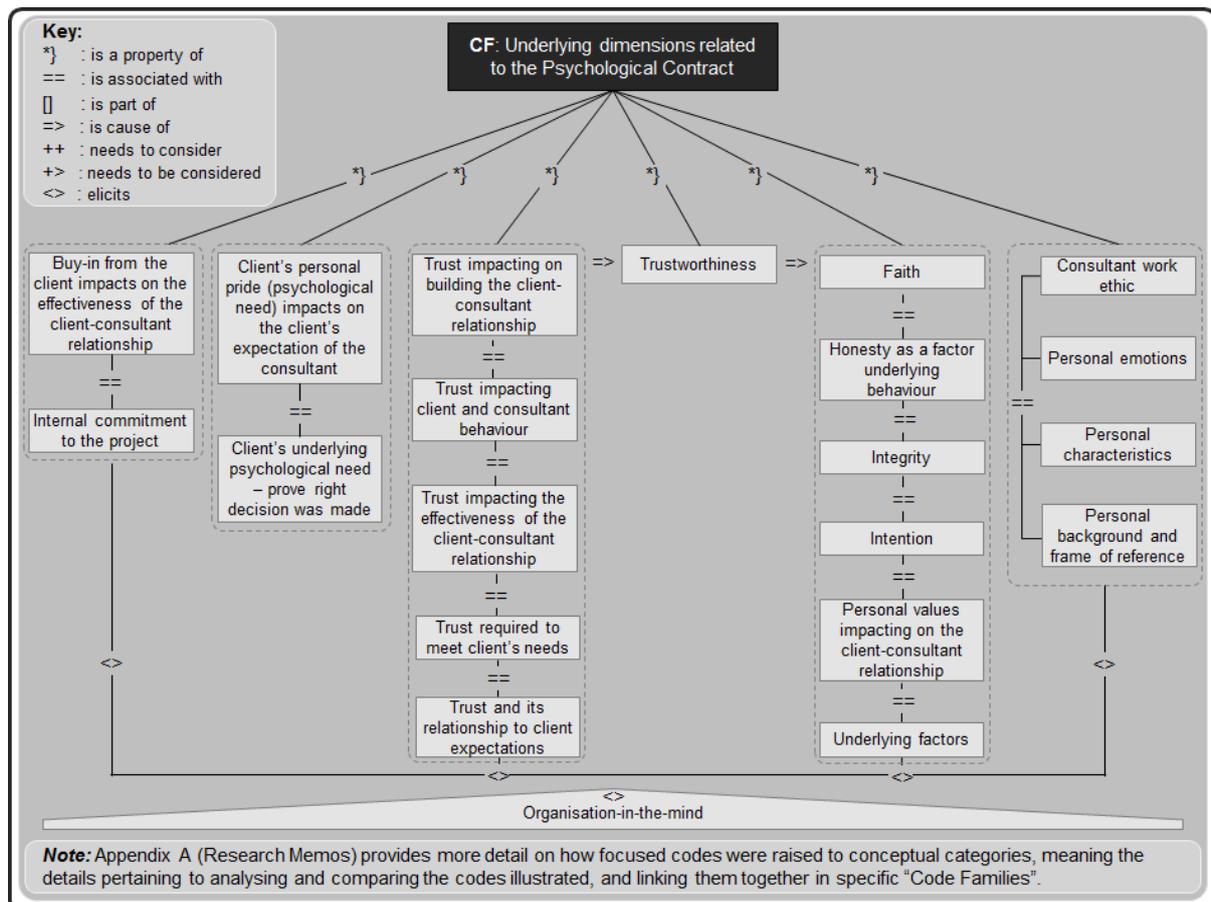


Figure 15: Graphic representation of “Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract” and its related codes

The last code as a property of “Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract” emerged as a “golden thread” throughout the analysis of the data. This code, labelled as “Organisation-in-the-mind,” proved to have a significant impact on all other underlying dimensions, as well as on some of the “Unwritten dimensions related to the Psychological Contract.”

Before going into a detailed discussion on organisation-in-the-mind as it emerged from the participant data, it is important to briefly revert back on the literature consulted during this research study.

According to Hutton et al. (1997:114), the organisation-in-the-mind consists of “what the individual perceives in his or her head” of how organisational activities and relations are organised, structured, and connected internally. It gives rise to (or elicits) images, emotions, values, and responses in an individuals, which will drive their behaviour in organisational systems (Hutton et al., 1997:114). Based on this explanation of the organisation-in-the-mind, it was included in the conceptual category “Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract.”

It is, however, important to note that organisation-in-the-mind is also described as a model, internal to oneself, that is essentially unconscious (Hutton et al., 1997:114). This description will, in fact, position it within the conceptual category “Unconscious processes.” However the analysis of the research data indicated that, although it is being created and informed by the individual’s unconscious processes, it manifests in the client-consultant relationship as a psychological factor that drives individual behaviour and the belief of what the client-consultant relationship requires to be successful. This finding is consistent with the research of Bullen (2003:50), Neumann (1997:10-18), and Ringer (2002). The manner in which “Organisation-in-the-mind” impacts the Psychological Contract between client and consultant is consistent with how other underlying dimensions, such as internal commitment, trust, personal characteristics and personal background, and frame of reference influence the relationship.

What differentiated “Organisation-in-the-mind” from the other dimensions of the conceptual category “Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract” is the fact that it elicited trust, certain personal emotions, characteristics, etc., almost appearing as an “underlying dimension to the underlying dimensions.” During semi-structured interview 2, the research participant provided an analogy to illustrate this when she commented that the organisation-in-the-mind is like the stage in a theatre production, creating the context for the unwritten and underlying, and that the characters are the unconscious processes within that context [No.8 (8:65)]. “Organisation-in-the-mind” was illustrated in figure 15 at the bottom of the graph, indicating its impact on each of the other codes pertaining to “Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract.” The following are some examples from the narrative and semi-structure interview data of “Organisation-in-the-mind” and its impact on client-consultant engagement:

**No.8 (8:62)**

*Participant :* ..... [Laughs] I mean I have to act a certain way and be a certain way and, in terms of all of those, in terms of the team, the Change Manager for the team, the Change Manager for the project and in terms of my relationship with the client, because all of those are on various levels, but all of those are, fit neatly into this picture of the organisation.

**No.8 (8:70)**

*Participant :* Big Nose Betty. Like she has very specific ideas about lots of things. But, in terms of, in terms of, like, how a team must work... Ah, she gave me like lessons on those... But she said, you know: “We have to go to each other...” And her whole thing was as a team, it’s you against your boss, which was weird for me [laughs], but she saw it exactly like that. And she is like that.

**No.9 (9:34)**

*Participant :* We, we work really hard to, [laughs] to almost create, uh, the perfect employee in terms of what we want from them, but they all come in

with their own ideas.....

**No.12 (12:77)**

*Participant : Producer-in-the-mind. Uh. Definitely. That probably had a huge impact, uh, on how I felt when I saw someone else not doing their, their job. And also, my organisation-in-the-mind then came through in how I evaluated what she did. In other words, I maybe projected onto her what I felt I would've done in her situation, measured against my organisation-in-the-mind.*

The above are not only examples of “Organisation-in-the-mind,” but also reflect the impact of “Organisation-in-the-mind” on other Psychological Contract dimensions identified in this research, with the last example indicating the link to unconscious processes such as projection.

In the next section, “Unconscious processes” as a conceptual category of implicit dimensions that impact the Psychological Contract between client and consultant will be discussed.

4.4.4.3 Unconscious processes related to the Psychological Contract

The last conceptual category relates to those “out of awareness,” subconscious processes that influence individuals as subjective beings, or, as literature refers to it, those irrational and unconscious processes at work within and between individuals that govern our “perceptual systems,” influence our beliefs and expectations, and drive our behaviour (Atkins et al., 1997:141; Bullen, 2003:4; Diamond & Allcorn, 2003: 492).

From the analysis of the participant data it became evident that there are certain unconscious defence mechanisms, processes, and reactions that emerge from, manifest in, and characterise the client-consultant relationship. The first set of codes relates to those unconscious or defence mechanisms evoked by anxiety experienced in the client-consultant relationship. The following are examples of defence

mechanisms that emerged and manifested in the participant client-consultant relationships:

“Defence mechanism to a particular threat”:

**No.4 (4:89)**

*Participant :* *[after a meeting with the client during which the consultant was “rudely interrupted”, and the client “continued without even giving me a chance to speak or a second glance.” Where the consultant “sat throughout the meeting, distracted, annoyed, confused and humiliated”]*

*After this incident I am, more than ever, convinced that Admiral Chatterbox is only humouring me, he’s not taking me seriously..... It might also be something about the fact that I’m 29 and a woman? I’m sure it can be that! I get the impression that he perceives me as a cute poppie that has no idea what I’m doing, one of those who just needs to have a pretty face and dress up a bit and everything will happen around her. I resent this!*

“Defence mechanism, justify unacceptable behaviour using reasonable explanations”:

**No.6 (6:9, 6:37) & No.12 (12:74) – participant 6, narrative and semi-structured interview**

*Participant :* *During Pre-Production, she habitually failed to represent important deliverables and also failed to show up at important production meetings. She reassured us, however, that it was because she was busy preparing the artwork, which was, after all, the most important visual signifier in the film.*

*I dismissed the warning signs because I was so impressed with her at the initial interview.*

*Uh. She told us what we wanted to hear. We heard it because we wanted to hear it. And our... And it relieved our anxiety by reassuring us of... So, she rationalised. And then, according to her rationalisation, we rationalised.*

Both codes, presented with examples above, refer to a defence mechanism called rationalisation. According to literature, rationalisation is the unconscious process through which the individual uses “reasonable” and “acceptable” explanations to justify unacceptable behaviour (Atkins et al., 1997:147; Bullen, 2003:25-27), or, as seen in the examples, relieve anxiety and explain emotions.

This also relates to the next code, “Defence mechanism to relief anxiety.” As can be seen in the example below, one of the project team members criticised the client in front of the other team members in an attempt to, as literature refers to it, “undo” one event and the anxiety experienced during that event by unconsciously creating another scenario to defer the anxiety (Atkins et al., 1997:147; Bullen, 2003:25-27).

#### **No.4 (4:15)**

*Participant : After this discussion, the meeting closed and Champion and Admiral Chatterbox left. As soon as they left, Big Nose Betty said: He [Admiral Chatterbox] does nothing, I’m telling you, he says he is busy with it, but I’ve been asking for it for two months now, and I’m telling you, he’s lazy, he does nothing. Everybody just looked at her. Nobody knew why she was getting so worked up over it.*

*What I found out later, made this incident clear: Champion had a meeting with her and Admiral Chatterbox moments prior to the meeting I attended; and at that specific meeting, they had a massive fall-out, to such an extent that Champion wants her off the project!*

From the analysis of the research data, it furthermore became apparent that individuals do not only create scenarios or act in a certain manner to “undo” anxiety,

but that they also project internal and/or unacceptable thoughts, feelings, and characteristics onto another in order to relieve anxiety. These occurrences in the narrative and semi-structured interview data were coded as “Defence mechanism, projection,” and are illustrated in the following examples:

**No.4 (4:16)**

*Participant :* Anyhow, I walked out of that second meeting feeling that I’ve lost the first battle, and I got the distinct impression that Admiral Chatterbox thinks/feels that I am totally and utterly useless.

**No.10 (10:42)**

*Participant :* But, you know, it’s quite interesting. We knew what each other felt, but we never shared it. I never shared how alienated I felt, why I felt myself to be not, so not well-connected with other people or whatever. I never mentioned it. And there are layers and layers to that, but I’m not gonna talk about it. But he also didn’t have connection. I knew what it was, why, most of it.

“Defence mechanism, projection” and “Perception of self”:

**No.8 (8:33 & 8:34)**

*Participant :* I think at that moment, I thought to myself... I can actually remember thinking to myself: “You might think I’m an idiot now, but wait ‘till we start working, because you’ll see what I can do.”

Literature asserts that projections are quite common in workplace relationships, and that it is experienced subjectively as being real, therefore forming the basis of our behaviour (underlying dimensions) and interpretations or perceptions (unwritten dimensions) of events (Bullen, 2003:25-27; Diamond & Allcorn, 2003: 494).

Another closely related defence mechanism that emerged from the research data is displacement (coded as “Psychological reaction or “kick-back” due to being “forced”). Displacement refers to the process where the individual unconsciously transfers

aggressive feelings or behaviours to another object that is less threatening (Atkins et al., 1997:147). As can be seen in the example below, the client may transfer aggressive feelings toward upper management or shareholders onto the consultant, which will make it difficult for the consultant to build rapport with the client:

**No.1 (1:17)**

*Participant :* Consider a situation where a client was forced, perhaps by upper management or shareholders, to employ the services of a consultant..... The consultant will have to work hard to find a way to build rapport with such a client.

The next unconscious mechanism used to relieve anxiety was evident in semi-structured interview 7 and coded as “Containment.” The code was linked to an event that occurred during the client’s project where one of the project team members took complete ownership and full responsibility of a part of the project that wasn’t her responsibility. Through doing so, she helped to relieve some of the stress resulting from the project, and enabled the consultant to contribute constructively to ensure that the project was successfully completed.

**No.7 (7:13 & 7:14)**

*Participant :* .....she took all the stress related to what she’s doing, because nobody wanted to help her.....what she did was the right thing. She took complete ownership and full responsibility until the system was rolled out.

Bullen (2003:24 & 33) describes the process of containment as an individual that fully applies themselves to a difficult task, that creates a safe environment, and develops structure and regulations to contain anxiety. In doing so, these individuals increase their ability to master and contain anxiety on behalf of the group (Bullen, 2003:33). From the example above, it is also evident that “Containment” can be linked to “Internal commitment,” identified as one of the “Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract.”

Since some of the participant client-consultant relationships occurred within a group or team, certain group-specific defence mechanisms impacting the client-consultant relationship emerged from the analysis of the research data. The following are examples, coded as “Defence mechanism by group,” which also indicate the relationship of these defence mechanisms of “Unwritten dimensions related to the Psychological Contract” and “Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract”:

**No.6 (6:14)**

*Participant :* I expected a level of work that was congruent with her remuneration and expertise. However, both of us reassured ourselves that she was one of the best in her field and that she would deliver when the Production stage commenced.

**No.5 (5:19 & 5:21)**

*Participant :* This is where the choice of Consultant had to withstand the test. Impatience, despondency and even aggression crept into the group. Additional meetings, visits and daily explanations and training strengthened the relationship of trust and pulled both teams through the project.

From these examples, the presence of resistance as a collective defence mechanism is quite clear. Resistance refers to the process where the group employs collective defence mechanisms such as displacement and denial to contain anxiety (Bion in Bullen, 2003:28-34). The above examples also indicated the relationship between “Defence mechanism by group,” “Trust influencing the effectiveness of the client-consultant relationship,” and “Expectations influencing the client-consultant relationship.”

Another mechanism that clients and consultants use to relieve anxiety and create a sense of “psychological security” is to assume the same characteristics of the self in others. This implicit dimension was coded as “Defence mechanism, assuming the same characteristics in another,” and is evident in the following quotations:

**No.4 (4:52) & No.8 (8:10) – participant 4, narrative and semi-structured interview**

*Participant :* After that brutal discussion, peace entered in the form of Peeping John. He is in the exact position I am in. His company is also receiving payment from Admiral Chatterbox's company, so to him, Admiral Chatterbox is also the client. He is just as dazed and confused as I am regarding the lack of project scope and he wishes to start from scratch with initiation. Also similar to me, he takes his orders from his superior, so we are simply bobbing on top of the water, waiting for our queue!

*Uh, I think I experienced a comfort in his presence, 'cause I felt we understand each other. It was also unwritten, unsaid thing. But I felt comfortable with him. Uh. I remember feeling... Ja. I didn't feel intimidated by him.*

**No.10 (10:5, & 10:8)**

*Participant :* It did to some extent come immediately, because on the first meeting that I had with him, we, there was warmth, there was just a feeling of warmth between the two of us.

*Researcher:* And can you explain that warmth?

*Participant :* I think, I think it probably came from the fact that, uh, at a fundamental level, I experienced what it's like to be marginalised.

*Researcher:* Okay.

*Participant :* And I, I... The reason was never spoken, but I think that was the underlying thing that connected us. He was marginalised by being Iranian. I came from a, a long background of history in terms of my own life where I had been marginalised. I think we made an emotional... I think we first made an emotional connection.

*Researcher: And you could identify with him and he with you.*

*Participant: ....ja. And so, it was a hugely successful thing because trust was established without really much effort.*

Literature refers to this defence mechanism as identification. Identification is the process through which the individual alleviates anxiety by assuming the characteristics or behaviour of another object (Atkins et al., 1997:147; Bullen, 2003:25-27).

The second example occurred during interview 4, and also highlighted the role that “Unwritten dimensions related to the Psychological Contract” play in relation to defence mechanisms such as identification. “Perception of the client” [No.10 (10:6)], “He was marginalised by being Iranian” and “Perception of self” [No.10 (10:7)], and “I came from a, a long background of history in terms of my own life where I had been marginalised” made the “connection” for the participant to identify with the client, which, in turn, caused trust to be “established without really much effort” [No.10 (10:9)].

From the last example, another code (“Unconscious processes”) can also be seen, i.e. “I think we made an emotional... I think we first made an emotional connection” [No.10 (10:8)]. This indicates that “Unconscious processes” does not necessarily relate to relieving anxiety and is independently linked to the conceptual category “Unconscious processes.” The code “Unconscious processes” refers to those processes that have an emotional or psychological impact on the client-consultant relationship of which individuals only become aware of “in hindsight.” Another example of “Unconscious processes” is:

**No.12 (12:6)**

*Participant: The, the sheer size of her contribution to the project made it possible for her to, uh, ja, to have a big impact, uh, not only on the end product and, uh, financially for the company and for the project, but also a big psychological impact, because everyone knew, everyone on the team,*

*uh, from the driver to the Director, everyone knew that this artwork and the apartment was the most important visual aspect in the film.*

The code “Losing interest” can also be associated with the code “Unconscious processes” since it has a similar effect on the client-consultant relationship. The emotion unconsciously evolves over time and has a definite impact on the individual’s conduct within the relationship. It also links to other “Unwritten dimensions related to the Psychological Contract” such as “Reciprocal exchange” and “Unwritten expectations.” The following is an example of the code “Losing interest”:

**No.11 (11:44)**

*Participant : Well, I would say, first of all, what makes, what made me lose interest was putting a lot of hours and effort into something and, first of all, there’s no recognition and reward for what you’ve done. It is just sort of blown off and changed without, you know, any thought going into it or any sort of remorse going into it. It’s just: “No, this is not what I wanted,” you know “carry on.” So, then, that’s what I start to feel, made to lose interest, is actually getting any sort of satisfaction out of it, cause it just never came. [Laughs despondently]*

The last independent code related to the conceptual category “Unconscious processes” is “Unconscious reactions.” This code only emerged during focused coding and the process of consulting previous literature when the researcher differentiated between some of the data linked to the code “Defence mechanism, projection.” It became apparent that “Unconscious reactions” stems from projection, and refers to client and consultant reactions that are associated with some past experience that is triggered and replicated within the current client-consultant relationship. Projection, on the other, hand refers to the process of projecting current internal and/or unacceptable thoughts, feelings, and characteristics onto another in a relationship. The following is a good example of this finding:

**No.10 (10:9)**

*Researcher: And can you explain that warmth?*

*Participant: Participant: I think, I think it probably came from the fact that, uh, at a fundamental level, I experienced what it's like to be marginalised.*

From the above it is clear that the consultant projected his own feelings of being marginalised onto the client as also having been marginalised, and then transferred his own past experience of being marginalised into his current relationship with the client, reacting toward the client based on his past experience of being marginalised.

Another example of “Unconscious reactions” includes the following:

**No.6 (6:6) & No.12 (12:71) – participant 6, narrative and semi-structured interview**

*Participant: As a result of her impressive CV and showreel, both the director and I felt confident in her capabilities.*

*.....I know what it takes to build a good showreel.....*

To conclude this section on the conceptual category “Unconscious processes,” it is clear that “Unconscious processes” has a big impact on the client-consultant relationship as it governs individual “perceptual systems,” influences individual beliefs and expectations (“Unwritten dimensions related to the Psychological Contract”), and affects individual behaviour (“Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract”). It is furthermore clear that the codes pertaining to this category are also closely associated with each other and give rise to, or elicit each other as seen in No.10 (10:5 & 10:8) and No.10 (10:9).

Upon referring back to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, section 2.2.3, it was found that individual unconscious processes are likely to form the basis of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant, and will significantly influence both the underlying and unwritten dimensions related to the Psychological Contract.

The findings of this research study, however, proved that there is a “two-way” relationship between the underlying and unwritten dimensions and the individual unconscious processes. The researcher therefore concluded that unconscious processes do not necessarily form the basis of the Psychological Contract, but that they profoundly influence the Psychological Contract and govern the unwritten and underlying dimensions, which, in turn, also elicits other unconscious processes (figure 16 below). The findings of this research study are therefore consistent with related organisational theories such as the Systems Theory and Psychodynamic Oriented Organisational Theory.

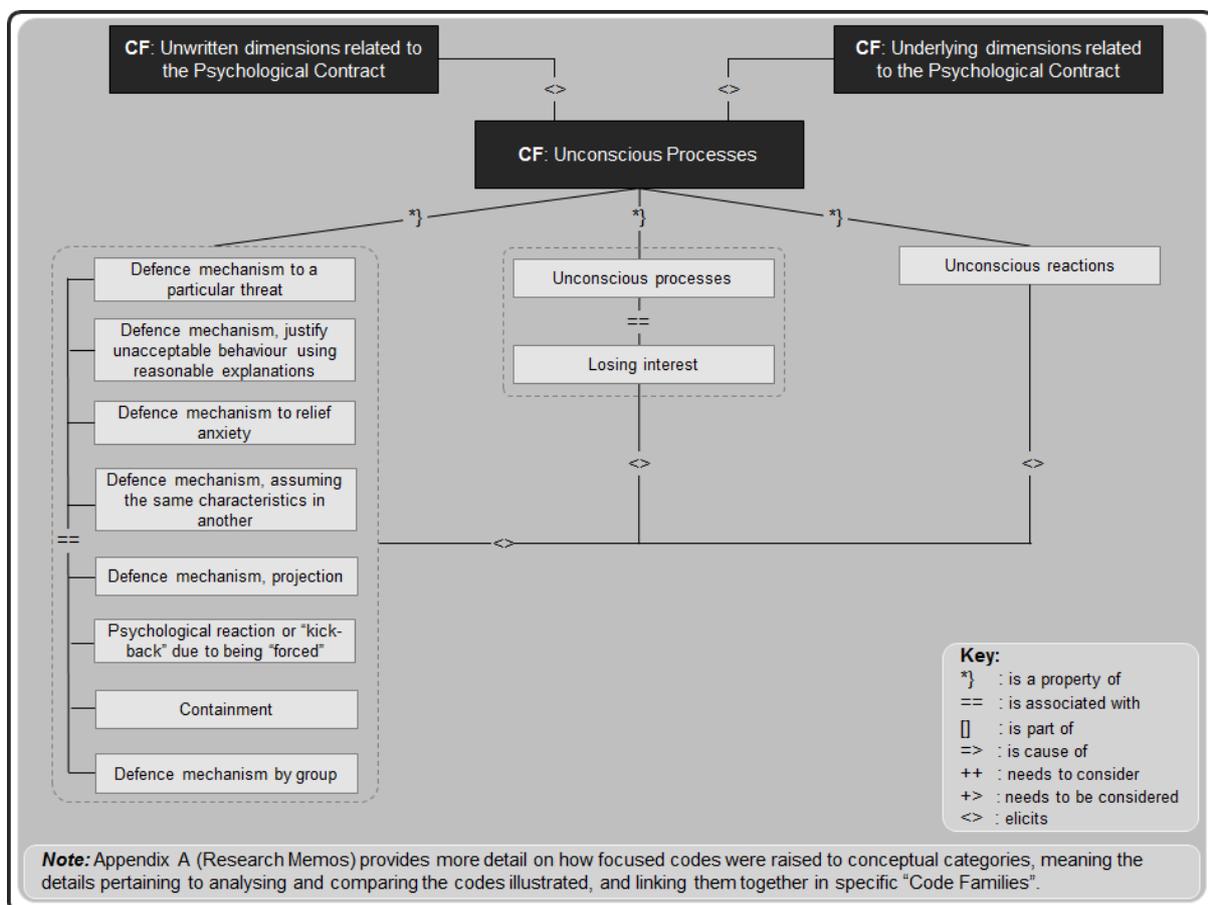


Figure 16: Graphic representation of the interrelatedness of “Unconscious processes,” its codes, and other implicit dimensions related to the Psychological Contract

In the next section, the findings on the implicit dimensions will be consolidated to indicate how they fit together and relate to one another. A high-level view of this interrelatedness will be presented as a foundation on which to discuss the framework of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant in Chapter 5.

#### 4.4.5 THE INTERRELATEDNESS OF THE IMPLICIT DIMENSIONS PERTAINING TO THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT BETWEEN CLIENT AND CONSULTANT

For the purpose of this research study, the researcher did not going to go into too much detail on the interdependency between the codes in the different conceptual categories, but rather focused on how the three conceptual categories relate to one another.

From several of the examples provided in section 4.4.4, it already became clear that the three conceptual categories representing the implicit dimensions of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant are very much interrelated and interdependent. One very good example from semi-structure interview 4 is:

##### **No.10 (10:5, & 10:8)**

*Participant :* *It did to some extent come immediately, because on the first meeting that I had with him, we, there was warmth, there was just a feeling of warmth between the two of us.*

*Researcher:* *And can you explain that warmth?*

*Participant :* *I think, I think it probably came from the fact that, uh, at a fundamental level, I experienced what it's like to be marginalised.*

*Researcher:* *Okay.*

*Participant :* *And I, I... The reason was never spoken, but I think that was the underlying thing that connected us. He was marginalised by being Iranian. I came from a, a long background of history in terms of my own life where I had been marginalised. I think we made an emotional... I think we first made an emotional connection.*

*Researcher:* *And you could identify with him and he with you.*

*Participant : .....ja. And so, it was a hugely successful thing because trust was established without really much effort.*

From this example, it is evident that:

1. The client had specific perceptions and subjective interpretations that impacted the client-consultant relationship (Unwritten dimensions related to the Psychological Contract):

- “Perception of self”
- “Perception of the client”

2. Certain underlying psychological factors had an impact on the client’s behaviour and the belief of what the client-consultant relationship requires to be successful (Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract):

“Trust impacting on building the client-consultant relationship”

3. Unconscious processes occurred in the relationship, which had a further impact on the client’s “perceptual systems,” beliefs and expectations, and which affected his behaviour (Unconscious processes):

- “Defence mechanism, projection”
- “Unconscious reactions”
- “Defence mechanism, assuming the same characteristics in another”
- “Unconscious processes”

4. Unconscious processes (“Defence mechanism, projection,” “Defence mechanism, assuming the same characteristics in another,” “Unconscious reactions,” and “Unconscious processes”) impact on unwritten dimensions (“Perception of self” and “Perception of the client”), which, in turn, have an impact on underlying dimensions (“Trust impacting on building the client-consultant relationship”) as seen in “I think it probably came from the fact that, uh, at a fundamental level, I experienced what it’s like to be marginalised.....And

I, I... The reason was never spoken, but I think that was the underlying thing that connected us. He was marginalised by being Iranian. I came from a, a long background of history in terms of my own life where I had been marginalised. I think we made an emotional... I think we first made an emotional connection.....ja. And so, it was a hugely successful thing because trust was established without really much effort.”

Another example that illustrates the interrelatedness between the implicit dimensions pertaining to the Psychological Contract between client and consultant came from semi-structure interview 6:

**No.12 (12:39 – 12:46, & 12:78 – 12:81)**

*Participant :* *And I relate different to both. In terms of her work ethic, I expect... I obviously project onto her what I expect, because I would've done it in a certain way. But if I take myself out of it, it's not just me projecting. It is what is supposed to be expected of her, because I feel, even though it wasn't stipulated precisely in the contract, that it was still part of the agreement, verbal agreement. So it wasn't... So, in terms of her work ethic, uh, that also comes from my organisation-in-the-mind. Definitely. But, more than that, it comes from what I feel should be expected of everyone. But it, once again, maybe it's what I feel should be expected, not what everyone feels, or what someone else might feel should be expected of everyone. Uh. Then, her integrity, I think there I project more, or maybe I, you know, fully project, when it comes to integrity, because, first of all, if I was not capable to do something, I would not have put myself forward as someone that is capable to do something.*

*Researcher:* Okay.

*Participant :* I would've, not have lied to begin with. And I see it as a lie.

*Researcher:* Yes.

*Participant : Then, I would not have, if I'm now in that situation, where now I need to deliver, I would've done everything in my power to not, uh, to not mess it up. So, I would've done everything I could. So, all of that stuff I'm projecting onto her. Then, furthermore, I would've also went, I would've gone to her and said... You know, if she was the Producer and I was in that position, I would've gone to her and said: "You know what, I'm struggling. This is what..." And put everything on the table, cause you can't deal with something if it's not on the table.*

From this example, it is evident that:

1. The client had specific perceptions and subjective interpretations that impacted the client-consultant relationship (Unwritten dimensions related to the Psychological Contract):
  - "Unwritten expectations"
  - "Expectations influencing the client-consultant relationship"
  - "Perception of self"
  - "Perception of being lied to"
  - "Perception of the consultant"
  - "Perceived role"
  
2. Certain underlying psychological factors had an impact on the client's behaviour and the belief of what the client-consultant relationship requires to be successful (Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract):
  - "Consultant work ethic"
  - "Personal values impacting on the client-consultant relationship"
  - "Integrity"
  - "Organisation-in-the-mind"
  - "Personal characteristics"
  - "Personal emotions"
  
3. Unconscious processes occurred in the relationship that furthermore had an impact on the client's "perceptual systems," beliefs and expectations, and which affected his behaviour (Unconscious processes):

- “Defence mechanism, projection”
4. Unwritten dimensions (“Expectations influencing the client-consultant relationship”) had an impact on underlying dimensions (“Personal emotions”), as seen in “It is what is supposed to be expected of her, because I feel, even though it wasn’t stipulated precisely in the contract, that it was still part of the agreement, verbal agreement.”
  5. Underlying dimensions (“Personal values impacting on the client-consultant relationship”) had an impact on unwritten dimensions (“Perception of self” and “Perception of being lied to”), as seen in “if I was not capable of doing something. I would not have put myself forward as someone that is capable to do something.....I would’ve, not have lied to begin with. And I see it as a lie.”
  6. Unwritten dimensions (“Unwritten expectations”) are related to unconscious processes (“Defence mechanism, projection”), as seen in “I expect... I obviously project onto her what I expect.”
  7. Underlying dimensions (“Integrity”) are related to unconscious processes (“Defence mechanism, projection”), as seen in “Then, her integrity, I think there I project more, or maybe I, you know, fully project, when it comes to integrity.”.
  8. Unconscious processes (“Defence mechanism, projection”) impact on unwritten dimensions (“Perception of the consultant”), as seen in “So, I would’ve done everything I could. So, all of that stuff I’m projecting onto her.”

Other examples pertaining to trust, expectations, personal values, etc. covered in preceding sections also confirm the findings related to these two examples [No.10 (10:5, & 10:8) and No.12 (12:39 – 12:46, & 12:78 – 12:81)]. Analysis of the research data indicated that the conceptual categories representing the implicit dimensions related to the Psychological Contract between client and consultant directly and indirectly impact on each other, and also give rise to, or elicit each other in specific circumstances. They are closely interrelated, meaning that clients and consultants should be aware of when and how these implicit dimensions manifest in order to be able to effectively manage their relationship and to ensure successful engagement.

The following figure illustrates a high-level view of the interrelatedness between the three conceptual categories representing the implicit dimensions related to the Psychological Contract between client and consultant:

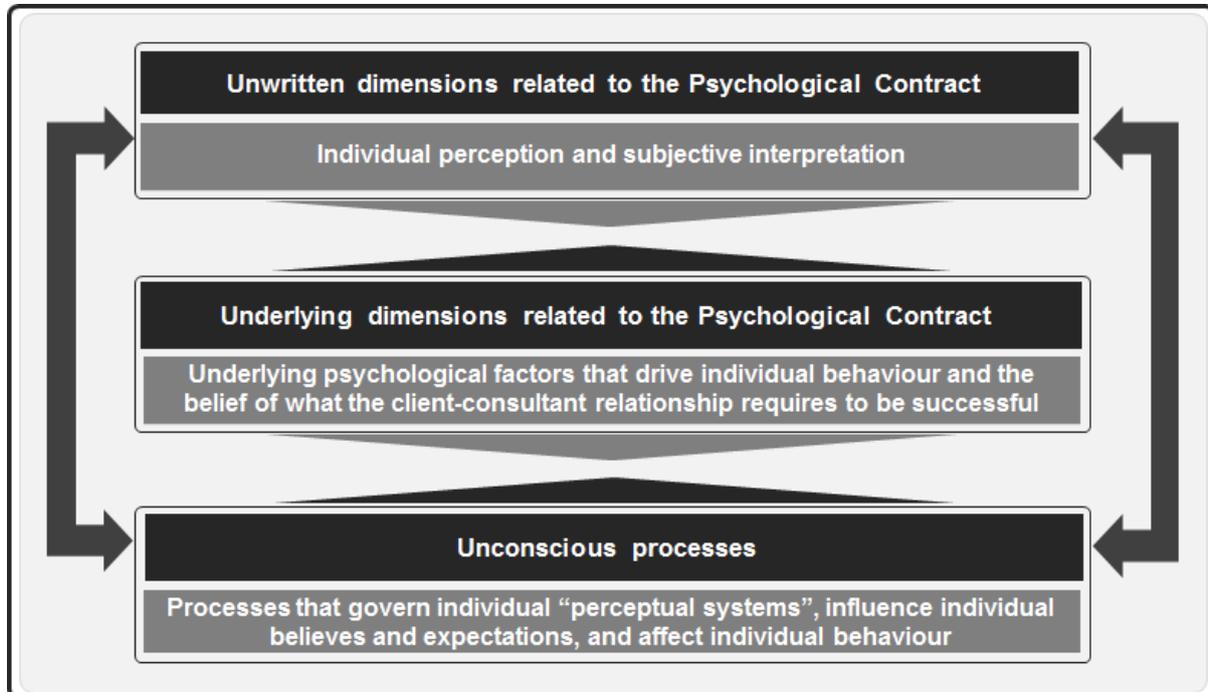


Figure 17: Graphic representation of the interrelatedness of the implicit dimensions pertaining to the Psychological Contract between client and consultant

#### 4.5 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter highlighted aspects such as the characteristics of the research participants and the researcher's ontological and epistemological assumptions, subjective perceptions and interpretations, and overall thinking about the research, which impacted the research process and were considered throughout. Most of Chapter 4, however, pertained to the analysis of the research data and a discussion of the findings.

In short, the analysis of the research data indicated that the codes identified can be grouped into six distinct conceptual categories that influence the Psychological Contract between client and consultant. Three of those categories were identified as explicit dimensions (aspects, factors, or actions that profoundly influence and impact

the client-consultant relationship, but are not inherently part of that relationship) and are referred to as (1) Aspects that will “scope” the nature of the Psychological Contract, (2) External factors impacting the client-consultant relationship, and (3) Project scoping, management, and governance.

The other three conceptual categories were identified as implicit dimensions (intangible aspects that are individually centred and intrinsically part of the client-consultant relationship that fall beyond the boundaries of verbal and contractual agreements) influencing the Psychological Contract between client and consultant. These are (1) Unwritten dimensions related to the Psychological Contract, (2) Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract, and (3) Unconscious processes. The research findings indicated that there is a close interrelatedness between the various codes related to each of these conceptual categories, and that the conceptual categories representing the implicit dimensions related to the Psychological Contract between client and consultant directly and indirectly impact on each other and also give rise to or elicit each other in specific circumstances.

In light of the purpose of this research study, Chapter 4 identified the implicit dimensions influencing the client-consultant relationship from both a client and consultant perspective, and indicated how they fit together and relate to one another. It provided detailed representations, as well as a high-level structure which will serve as the foundation on which to develop the framework of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant as it emerged from the research findings.

In the next chapter, the findings as discussed in this chapter will be further refined and consolidated to provide a comprehensive framework of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant. The chapter will conclude with the limitations and implications of the research study, as well as recommendations for further studies.

## CHAPTER 5

### RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study firmly established the need to conduct further research on the dimensions impacting the client-consultant relationship that fall beyond the scope, objectives, and terms of exchange incorporated in contractual agreements between client and consultant. Current research on those aspects that constitute successful client-consultant engagement highlights dimensions such as internal commitment, subjective interpretation, expectations, and unconscious processes, but how these dimensions fit together, relate to each other, and manifest in the client-consultant relationship, remains to be explored. As such, the purpose of this study was to gain a collective understanding of those aspects that constitute successful consulting, focusing on the implicit dimensions that influence client-consultant engagement.

In an attempt to close the existing gap in research on client-consultant engagement, this research study explored the implicit dimensions influencing the client-consultant relationship by utilising the concept of the Psychological Contract, as it offers a broad explanatory framework for understanding organisational relationships.

The aim of this research study was to add value by presenting a new perspective on and extend understanding of the implicit dimensions influencing the client-consultant relationship by focusing on both clients and consultants through the unique lens of the Psychological Contract.

This exploration of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant was conducted through the interpretivist paradigm, or to be more specific, a social constructivist approach. This approach allowed the researcher to explore the Psychological Contract between client and consultant through the constructed meanings that both clients and consultants attach to their experience of the client-consultant relationship, and enabled the researcher to explore their perceptions and

interpretations of the dimensions that influenced that relationship. The researcher furthermore applied a qualitative research design and constructivist grounded theory method to explore the subjective meanings of clients and consultants, and to discover their reality. This design and method generated rich, in-depth data and understanding of the participants' beliefs, perceptions, and subjective experiences. The specific constructivist grounded theory methods and techniques followed in the research were sufficiently stated and explained in Chapter 3. Motivation for the use of these methods and techniques was based on (1) the research questions, research aim, and research goals, (2) the nature of the phenomenon to be explored, and (3) the ontological and epistemological positions that underpinned the researcher's beliefs related to this research.

As presented and explained in Chapter 2, the exploration also made use of existing literature on the Psychological Contract within the employer-employee relationship, as well as literature on client-consultant engagement to provide a theoretical framework to support the analysis of the research data.

This inductive-abductive approach provided an intense discovery process whereby codes, themes, and conceptual categories emerged from the data (both theoretical and the participant data). The codes were thoroughly analysed and raised to higher levels of conceptual categories according to the provided structure, which resulted in the identification of implicit dimensions influencing the client-consultant relationship, and how they fit together and relate to one another. Chapter 4 provided a detailed discussion and representation of these findings which, will serve as the foundation on which to develop a comprehensive framework of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant in this chapter.

This chapter aims firstly, to further refine the findings presented in Chapter 4, secondly, to integrate the findings in the context of this study, and, thirdly, to answer the research questions stated at the onset of this exploration. The chapter concludes with the limitations and implications of the research study, as well as recommendations for further studies.

## **5.2 REFINING THE CODES AND CONCEPTUAL CATEGORIES THAT EMERGED FROM THE RESEARCH DATA**

From Chapter 4, table 5 (final structure and feedback response frequencies of the codes and categories that emerged from the analysis of the data) it is clear that there were a significant amount of codes identified from the participant data. From the discussion of the findings, however, it became apparent that several of these codes were closely associated with each other, and could therefore be collapsed into one.

The purpose of this section is to refine the codes related to each conceptual category, and to define the conceptual categories and codes in order to convey the true meaning thereof as it emerged from this research study and as it relates to the concept of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant. The focus here will be on both the explicit and implicit dimensions identified, as the researcher believes that implicit dimensions should always be considered within the context in which they manifest or evolve. Conceptual categories will also from here on be referred to as categories, and codes will be referred to as properties.

### **Table 7: Definitions of the categories and properties related to the Psychological Contract between client and consultant**

### 1. Explicit Dimension: Aspects that will “scope” the nature of the Psychological Contract

**Definition:** Those aspects or actions that should precede project “kick off” and be conducted throughout the client-consultant engagement, as it will “scope” the nature of the Psychological Contract and elicit specific unwritten and underlying dimensions, as well as unconscious processes.

Code(s)	Property(ies)	Definition
Client-consultant required action which will “scope” the nature of the Psychological Contract	Project contracting and client-consultant required actions	Those aspects or actions that should precede project “kick off” and be conducted throughout the client-consultant engagement, such as defining roles and responsibilities, aligning values, clarifying understanding and expectations, daily explanations and training, and sharing expertise.
Effective contracting		

### 2. Explicit dimension: External factors impacting the client-consultant relationship

**Definition:** Those tangible, as well as not so tangible factors present in the context of the client-consultant relationship that should be considered throughout the course of the relationship in terms of its impact on both parties to the relationship.

Code(s)	Property(ies)	Definition
External factors causing uncertainty	External factors	<p>External factors related to the nature of the project and project context such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Third-party relationships with other clients or consulting organisations;</li> <li>▪ Other projects or systems running in parallel;</li> <li>▪ Stakeholders in the form of e.g., governments, royal families etc.;</li> <li>▪ Stakeholder committees or project boards;</li> <li>▪ The context within which the project is implemented, i.e. organisational context (and organisation requirements), cultural differences, level of sophistication of people involved, language difficulties;</li> <li>▪ Specific legislative requirements (and standards);</li> <li>▪ The nature of the industry;</li> <li>▪ The nature of the project and specific project requirements;</li> <li>▪ Increase in project scope;</li> <li>▪ Client representative;</li> <li>▪ Availability of client;</li> <li>▪ Project team dynamics;</li> <li>▪ Mentors and Coaches; and</li> <li>▪ Consultant's capability, expertise, and performance.</li> </ul>
External factors impacting the client-consultant relationship		
Organisation as a system impacting the client-consultant relationship	Organisation as a system	The organisational values, mission, and objectives as well as the many subsystems, functions, and processes that are in dynamic interaction with one another.

### 3. Explicit dimension: Project “scoping,” management, and governance

**Definition:** The manner in which projects are being “scoped”, managed, and governed.

Code(s)	Property(ies)	Definition
Insufficient project scoping, management and governance	Insufficient project scoping, management and governance	The manner in which projects are being “scoped” (whether the project is geared towards addressing the real client requirements and that the solution offered is, in fact, what the client needs), managed (meetings, roles, and deliverables), and governed (meeting deadlines, meeting client requirements, escalating project risks, and issues appropriately) is ineffective.
Successful project scoping, management and governance	Successful project scoping, management and governance	The manner in which projects are being “scoped” (whether the project is geared towards addressing the real client requirements and that the solution offered is, in fact, what the client needs), managed (meetings, roles, and deliverables), and governed (meeting deadlines, meeting client requirements, escalating project risks and issues appropriately) is effective.

### 4. Implicit dimension: Unwritten dimensions related to the Psychological Contract

**Definition:** Individual perception and subjective interpretation that influence the client-consultant relationship.

Code(s)	Property(ies)	Definition
Client demand additional work (client expectation)	Client and consultant expectations	Explicit expectations that coincide with a specific role, but which are not necessarily agreed upon (verbally or contractually).
Client expectations not met		
Expectations influencing the client-consultant relationship		
Unwritten expectation	Unwritten expectations	Implicit expectations that are not agreed upon, caused by individual perceptions, psychological factors, or unconscious processes that evolve over time and continue to act as a boundary that guides individual actions and behaviours.
Perceived role	Perceived role definition	The image or idea, created by interpreting what a specific role means, that the individual believes he or she has agreed to.
Perception of being lied to	Individual perceptions	An image or idea pertaining to the self and/or others, based on subjective interpretations, which greatly influences emotions and behaviour.
Perception of self		
Perception of the client		
Perception of the consultant		

Reciprocal exchange	Reciprocal exchange	The individual's understanding of explicit and implicit promises or rewards regarding their contributions for certain inducements from another party and/or certain individual inducements or socio-emotional rewards.
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### 5. Implicit dimension: Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract

**Definition:** Underlying psychological factors that drive individual behaviour and the belief of what the client-consultant relationship requires to be successful.

Code(s)	Property(ies)	Definition
Buy-in from the client impacts on the effectiveness of the client-consultant relationship Internal commitment	Buy-in and internal commitment	Influenced by expectations, buy-in and internal commitment refers to the processes of client identification, psychological ownership, and the degree of emotional attachment to the project, which governs the productivity of the client-consultant relationship.
Client's personal pride (psychological need) impacts on the client's expectation of the consultant Client's underlying psychological need – prove right decision was made	Psychological needs	Underlying psychological needs that drive individual behaviour and the belief of what the client-consultant relationship requires to be successful.
Faith Honesty as factor underlying behaviour Integrity Intention Personal values impacting on the client-consultant relationship Underlying factors	Underlying factors	Personal values and attributes assigned to the self or others, based on an interpretation of the meaning of certain behaviours or events. These include integrity, honesty, openness, faith, respect, passion, and intention.
Trustworthiness	Trustworthiness	A psychological construct, resulting from a positive interpretation of the meaning of certain behaviours or events (underlying factors), and a principal determinant of trust.
Trust and its relationship to client expectations Trust impacting on building the client-consultant relationship Trust impacting client and consultant behaviour Trust impacting the effectiveness of the client-consultant relationship Trust required to meet client's needs	Trust	A psychological state resulting from the positive interpretation of the meaning of certain behaviours or events (underlying factors) and the belief that the other person is trustworthy. It is closely related to client and consultant expectations, impacts the establishment of the client-consultant relationship, influences client and consultant behaviour, and impacts the overall effectiveness and success of the client-consultant relationship.

Consultant work ethic	Work ethic, personal characteristics, and emotions	The individual's quality of deliverables, way of work, standards of work, feelings experienced in the client-consultant relationship, and general conduct throughout the client-consultant engagement.
Personal background and frame of reference		
Personal characteristics		
Personal emotions		
Organisation-in-the-mind	Organisation-in-the-mind	Created over time and informed by unconscious processes, the organisation-in-the-mind pertains to individual perceptions of how organisational activities and relations are organised, structured, and connected internally, which elicits images, emotions, values, and responses in individuals, and drives behaviour in client-consultant relationships.

## 6. Implicit dimension: Unconscious processes

**Definition:** Processes that govern individual “perceptual systems”, influence individual beliefs and expectations, and affect individual behaviour.

Code(s)	Property(ies)	Definition
Containment	Defence mechanisms	Unconscious defensive strategies deployed by individuals or groups of individuals to cope with the anxiety that arises in the client-consultant relationship such as projection, identification, rationalisation, undoing, displacement, containment, and resistance.
Defence mechanism by group		
Defence mechanism to a particular threat		
Defence mechanism to relief anxiety		
Defence mechanism, assuming the same characteristics in another		
Defence mechanism, justify unacceptable behaviour using reasonable explanations		
Defence mechanism, projection		
Psychological reaction or “kick-back” due to being “forced”		
Losing interest	Unconscious processes	Those processes that have an emotional or psychological impact on the client-consultant relationship of which individuals only become aware of “in hindsight” i.e. emotional connection due to identification and transference.
Unconscious processes		
Unconscious reactions	Unconscious reactions	A result of projection and refers to those unconscious reactions that are associated with some past experience that is triggered and replicated within the current client-consultant relationship.

The next section will focus solely on the implicit dimensions referred to in table 7 and provide a comprehensive framework of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant.

### **5.3 INTEGRATION OF THE FINDINGS**

Referring back to Rousseau's definition of the Psychological Contract adopted for the purposes of this research, it was already clear from Chapter 4 that her definition falls short in terms of the depth and range of the implicit dimensions referred to. Rousseau's (1990:390 & 1995:9) view of the Psychological Contract, applied to the client-consultant relationship, can be defined as the client and consultant's mental beliefs and expectations about their mutual obligations in a contractual relationship, based on the perceptions of both parties of the terms of a reciprocal exchange.

The purpose of this section is, firstly, to integrate the research findings and present a comprehensive framework of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant, and, secondly, to provide a definition of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant as it emerged from this research study.

The graphic representation below indicates a consolidated view of the findings discussed in Chapter 4, and illustrates how the refined categories and properties as per table 7 fit together and relate to one another as a comprehensive framework of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant:

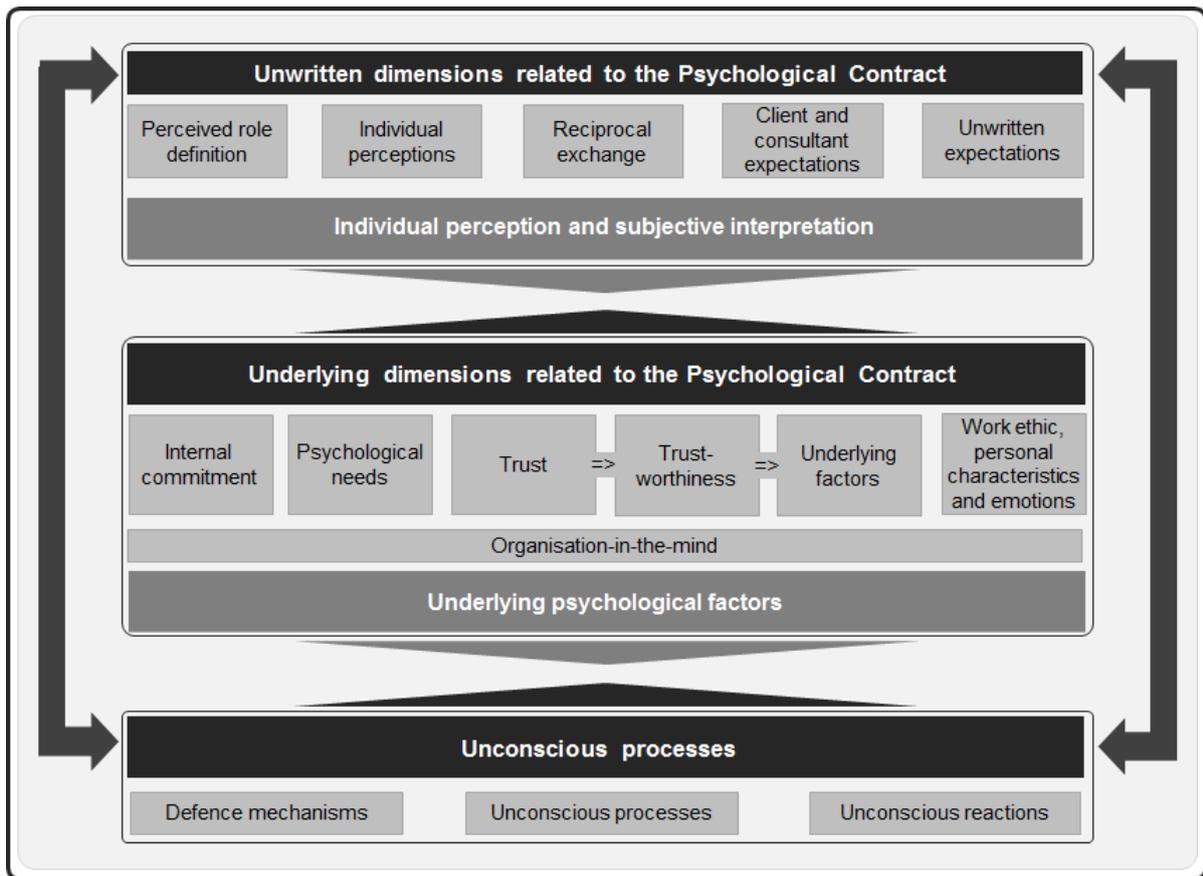


Figure 18: A comprehensive framework of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant

Given the Psychological Contract between client and consultant as presented in the figure above, the researcher provides the following definition of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant:

*The Psychological Contract consists of the unconscious processes, underlying psychological factors and individual perceptions and subjective interpretations of both the client and consultant that drive individual behaviour and the belief and expectations of what the relationship requires to be successful.*

#### 5.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS REVIEWED

In light of the research results presented in sections 5.2 and 5.3, this study now moves to review the research questions asked at the onset of this exploration. The research questions formulated for this study were:

- What are the implicit dimensions (those aspects that fall beyond the boundaries of the contractual agreement) influencing the client-consultant relationship from both a client's and consultant's perspective?
- How do these implicit dimensions fit together and relate to one another in order to create a framework of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant?

The researcher believes that, from Chapter 4 to Chapter 5 section 5.3, all the research questions were sufficiently answered, and the method and reasoning leading to the answers were explained.

The aim of this research study - to add value through presenting a new perspective and extend understanding of the implicit dimensions influencing the client-consultant relationship by focusing on both clients and consultants through the unique lens of the Psychological Contract - has also been achieved.

## **5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The research population and resulting representative sample was limiting from a perspective of homogeneity and generalisability. Initially, non-probability, purposive sampling was used, and as a result, three clients and three consultants were chosen to partake in this research study. The only condition that influenced the choice of clients and consultants was that they had to have experienced at least one end-to-end consulting engagement. The choice of population was not dependent on the type of consulting or the type of industry. The data collected from this sample showed a substantial difference in the participants' descriptions of their experience of the client-consultant engagement and also indicated that they attached significantly different meanings and experiences to similar situations. As such, the research data provided a lot of variety to work with, which, to some degree, limited the richness of the data content. The researcher reflected on this, and acknowledged the fact that the participants as subjective beings from different backgrounds and industries brought different meanings to the study. The

researcher also considered this throughout the analysis of the data, and used this knowledge as a platform during the process of theoretical sampling (semi-structured interviews) to extract richer, more in-depth data. In most instances, this proved to be successful, however, during the final integration of the findings, it became apparent that some of the dimensions would require further exploration. The researcher still believes that this exploration is relevant and value adding in the sense that it explored six individuals' personal experiences and understanding of the implicit dimensions that influence the client-consultant relationship, from both a client's and a consultant's perspective, and the researcher was able to, in line with the aim of this study, present a comprehensive framework of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant to be further explored in comparable studies in future.

The second limitation believed to have had an impact on this research was the researcher herself and the inductive approach to data analysis used. To be more specific, the researcher believes that her ontological and epistemological assumptions, as well as overall subjective experience, interpretation, and thinking about the research had a definite impact on the entire research study and subsequent results. The researcher did, however, acknowledge this early on in the research, and through extensive memo-ing and systematic-comparative analysis attempted to be as objective and transparent as possible. The researcher therefore limited her subjective impact from "contaminating" the research, and also enabled the reader or user of this research to discern whether the findings are indeed relevant and applicable. The researcher urges the reader or user of this research to refer to table 4 (researcher's ontological and epistemological assumptions, subjective perceptions and interpretations, and overall thinking about the research) as well as Appendix A (Research Memos) when interpreting the research results. Lastly, the researcher believes, true to the social constructivist approach to research, that close subjective interrelationships, the "co-construction of meaning," and a position of mutuality between researcher and participant were crucial to the success of this exploration.

Another potentially limiting factor was the timing of the data collection. The researcher was dependent on the participants to write their short reflective

narratives, send it back to her to analyse and prepare for the semi-structured interviews, and to conduct the interviews with consideration for the participants' busy schedules. The time lapses between some of the narratives and semi-structured interviews were quite big, the longest of which was the narrative having been written in November 2010 and the semi-structured interview conducted in March 2011. During the semi-structured interview, however, after again reading through their narratives, the participants did not seem to have any trouble recalling their experiences and the meanings they attached thereto. Although challenging, the researcher does not believe that the timing of the data collection had a significant impact on the research results.

## **5.6 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY**

The results of this research study have both theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical perspective, this research study identified the implicit dimensions from both a client and consultant perspective, that influence the client-consultant relationship and profoundly impact on the productivity, effectiveness, and outcome of that relationship. In order to facilitate transferability, the interpretation of the implicit dimensions and relationships between those dimensions provide a broader spectrum from which to understand the ongoing client-consultant relationship, study client-consultant engagement, and determine what it requires in order to constitute successful consulting.

The resulting integrated framework of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant as presented at the end of this research study furthermore provides a generic view that could be used for future research and investigation. Thus, this explorative study provides a body of literature that can enable researchers and theorists to continue to explore the Psychological Contract between client and consultant with an enhanced understanding of the concept and its related categories. Furthermore, this research study provides a definition for the Psychological Contract between client and consultant that extends beyond elements such as perceptions, expectations, and mutual obligations, and includes psychological properties and unconscious processes. It is the researcher's hope

that this research study will encourage other researchers to test this framework and provide empirical support for the implicit dimensions related to the Psychological Contract between client and consultant.

Furthermore, the findings that were discussed, attempted to isolate the properties of the implicit dimensions influencing the client-consultant relationship and explore each property in relation to both other properties and the Psychological Contract in such a way as to make it more transferable to any client-consultant experience in any type of industry. In doing so, this research study stands to make a significant contribution to individuals' understanding of the client-consultant relationship in different contexts and industries.

The greatest impact of this study is that it provides a new perspective and extends understanding of the implicit dimensions at play in the client-consultant relationship, which will assist consultants to identify and interpret these implicit dimensions, understand how these impact their relationship with their clients, and enable them to effectively manage the Psychological Contract in a manner that is beneficial to both the client and the consultant.

On a very practical note, clients and consultants can use figure 18 (a comprehensive framework of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant) and table 7 (definitions of the categories and properties related to the Psychological Contract between client and consultant) as conversation templates during contracting and project progress meetings to identify and discuss the implicit dimensions that may potentially influence their relationship, in order to ensure and maintain the “meeting of the minds” that is required for successful client-consultant engagement.

## **5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The exploration of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant provides a body of literature that can pioneer the way for future research on client-consultant engagement, such as:

- Each implicit dimension with its related properties can be explored in more depth to broaden understanding of exactly how it manifests in the client-consultant relationship, how it can be effectively managed in that relationship, and how it translates into successful client-consultant engagement;
- The framework of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant can be further explored in order to validate the categories and related properties;
- In light of the limitations of this research study, the framework of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant can be further explored in comparative studies across different industries and types of consulting relationships; and
- In the current context of project management, where there is quite a big emphasis on the application of effective and standardised Project Management Methodologies, the Psychological Contract between client and consultant, as well as the explicit dimensions identified, can be researched as a key contribution to those methodologies.

## **5.8 CONCLUSION**

The aim of this exploration was to provide a new perspective and extend understanding of the implicit dimensions influencing the client-consultant relationship by focusing on both clients and consultants through the unique lens of the Psychological Contract. The researcher believes that the research study achieved this aim through the application of a sound and appropriate research paradigm, design, and method, rigorous data analysis, truthful interpretation of the research findings, and effective integration of the research results. The researcher furthermore believes that although there are some limitations related to this research, it makes a valuable contribution toward existing theory on client-consultant engagement, identifies gaps for future related research, and provides a practical framework to be applied in identifying, understanding, and managing the implicit dimensions that influence the success of the client-consultant relationship.

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## APPENDIX A – Research Memos

### **Narrative 1: Comments and Memos**

#### **Naïve Memo**

This narrative gives a strong sense of the Client i.t.o what is important in the client-consultant relationship which must be upheld from both parties' side. It gives a sense of the Client's belief in certain personal attributes that should be present in the client-consultant engagement such as upholding confidentiality, communication, honesty in communication.

The Client also focuses very much on specific actions that should happen, such as alignment of values, clarification of expectations, personal vs. third party appointment of consultants, buy-in from the direct client etc.

The general sense that I get from this narrative is not really related to the Psychological Contract as much as it is to specific tasks and actions that both the Client and Consultant must "do" in order to "regulate" / "guide" the nature of the Psychological Contract between them.

#### **Initial Code Memo**

Strong focus on client-consultant required actions.

"Alignment of values is important in building relationships" - why? What impact will it have on the client-consultant relationship? Is it an underlying dimension that will drive behaviour in the relationship?

Clarification of expectations around confidentiality. Why? What is the impact thereof on the Psychological Contract? Is this really a Psychological Contract dimension, or should it be part of the phase of "Contracting"? Consult Literature

Also commented on specific aspects that are important for building the Client-Consultant relationship, for ensuring that the Client-Consultant relationship is effective.

Other very interesting aspects emerging from this narrative is the "Client Psychological Reactions" based on external factors, which enters into the Client-Consultant relationship.

#### **Focused Code Memo**

From the Initial codes, and in comparing them, strong themes emerged.

Firstly, there were certain specific actions required which will "scope" the nature of the Psychological Contract, such as a service level agreement, alignment of values, upholding confidentiality and communication.

The following were connected to impacting the establishment and effectiveness of the Client-Consultant relationship; buy-in from the Client; Client psychological needs; Individual defence mechanisms; External factors; Client psychological reactions; honesty; trust and values).

Sub-themes within these also emerged, such as (1) dimensions that directly relate to the Client's expectations of the consultant (i.e. Client's personal pride and trust); (2) dimensions that underlie client-consultant behaviour (i.e. honesty and trust); (3) Individual Defence Mechanism (i.e. withholding information); and (4) psychological reactions as a result of positive and negative feedback on the Consultant, or because the Client was forced to appoint the Consultant.

With regard to the above, I have found in my own experience in client systems, that it is difficult to maintain a productive and effective relationship when our values (work values and personal values) are not aligned. My personal and work values influences how I perceive my role (and responsibilities) and my belief in what behaviours the Client will reciprocate (Mutual & Federal, Ask Afrika).

Note to myself: in the write-up, conduct additional research on "Values", "Client buy-in" and "Maintaining confidentiality" (confidentiality as part of, or not as part of the Contracting phase).

## **Literature Memo**

When consulting the literature reviewed for this research study, there is a clear link as seen in the following:

Unwritten dimensions related to the Psychological Contract (resulting from individual perception and subjective interpretation)

- Values (the need to align client and consultant values in building an effective relationship)
- The client's pride and consideration for his / her reputation placing certain expectations on the consultant

Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract (underlying psychological factors that drive individual behaviour and the belief of it resulting in having a beneficial effect)

- Trust (which, as found in literature pertaining to the client-consultant relationship, is also linked to client expectations)
- Buy-in from the client (to be confirmed in the semi-structured interview, could relate to internal commitment)
- Honesty (which is also associated with creating trust and respect)

Unconscious processes (defence mechanisms to avoid anxiety, and unconscious reactions)

- Defence mechanisms to avoid anxiety (i.e. withholding information in fear that the consultant is not trustworthy, or where a client was forced to work with a consultant, and makes it difficult to "build rapport")
- Unconscious reactions (transference, i.e. a third-party recommends the consultant, and a strong relationship is established, or when feedback of the

consultant to the client is negative, it may affect the productivity of the relationship)

Then the narrative also delivered insight into specific actions required which will “scope” the nature of the Psychological Contract, such as alignment of values, upholding confidentiality and communication.

It also discloses the impact that third-parties may have on the relationship, as seen in the unconscious client reaction referred to as transference.

### **Conceptual Category Memo**

Semi-structured interview conversation and question topics:

In your narrative you elaborated on aspects that I “coded” as “client-consultant required actions which will “scope” the nature of the Psychological Contract. These you referred to as the actual service level agreement, alignment of values, upholding confidentiality and communication. I interpreted these as specific actions that will help clarify expectations and create a “mutual” understanding of what is to be achieved.

I would however like to ask you if you could elaborate on what you meant with “Alignment of values is important in building relationships. If this cannot be established early on, the client-consultant relationship will be doomed”. What is the meaning you attach to this, what does it mean on an individual level, and what impact will it have on the client-consultant relationship?

You also spoke about the client’s pride and consideration for his / her reputation which places certain expectations on the consultant. How do you think this influences the individual perception and subjective interpretation of the consultant behaviour and deliverables?

Please can you elaborate on your statement “If the client personally appointed the consultant, there will be vested interest on the client’s side to prove to the organisation that the right decision was made”. What does this entail? What is the meaning you attach to this type of scenario?

Then you’ve seemed to place quite a big emphasis on trust, and the need for the client to perceive the consultant as trustworthy. I interpreted this in line with available research as an underlying psychological factor that will drive individual behaviour (both the behaviour of the client and that of the consultant). What is your opinion of this?

You furthermore linked honesty to trust, saying that without open and honest communication, that trust and respect will be “broken down”. How do you perceive honesty in relation to trust?

Another dimension you referred to that I would like to talk about is buy-in. you commented in your narrative that “without buy-in from the direct client, such a relationship (client-consultant relationship) has no prospect to be productive or

effective”. Literature on the client-consultant relationship emphasises concepts such as client identification, internal commitment and psychological ownership as key to effective client-consultant relationships. Do you think buy-in relates to this at all? In what way?

Something really interesting came from examples of behaviours you described in your narrative, i.e. withholding information in fear that the consultant is not trustworthy, or where a client was forced to work with a consultant, and makes it difficult to “build rapport”. From literature, these are behaviours resulting from “unconscious” processes such as:

- Rationalisation, a defence mechanism whereby the individual uses "reasonable" explanations to justify behaviour to avoid certain consequences that may lead to anxiety (withholding information)
- Displacement, a defence mechanism through which the individual unconsciously transfer aggressive feelings or behaviours to oneself or another object that is less threatening (making it difficult to build rapport with the less threatening object, the consultant)

What is your perception of this?

Lastly, you noted behaviours that relates to the influence of third-parties, i.e. a third-party recommends the consultant, and a strong relationship is established, or when feedback of the consultant to the client is negative, it may affect the productivity of the relationship. These types of behaviours are also referred to as transference (the displacement of patterns of feelings, thoughts and behaviour onto a person involved in a current interpersonal relationship), meaning that clients tend to displace what they heard from third parties onto the consultant, and behave toward the consultant in a manner consistent with what they through, based on the feedback from others. What is your perception on this?

## **Narrative 2: Comments and Memos**

### **Naïve Memo**

The narrative as a whole focused very much on the project scoping, implementation and progress processes. Aspects that stands out is insufficient role definition leading to role confusion between the role players, explicit and implicit promises were attached to certain deliverables, which ultimately drove expectations from all three parties involved. This “promising” also continued throughout the project, acting as a motivator factor to continue with implementation (influenced consultant behaviour).

There was furthermore a strong focus behaviour (as opposed to feelings / emotions) which need to be explored in this analysis. What was the dimensions underlying how the project played out, and what was the dimensions underlying the behaviours at play?

### **Initial Code Memo**

Insufficient project scoping, management and governance. I can't help but wonder what exactly made you continue with the work?

Not meeting client expectations negatively impacting the client-consultant relationship. How did it impact the relationship? What dimensions of the relationship was impacted?

Strong link between explicit and implicit promises and what the client expected (demanded). “I feel it gave the client more reason to demand additional items to be included” How. How did the fact that you were promised further project cause the client to demand additional out of scope items? What was the client perception on this?

Perceived role. Why did they continue to do work that was out of scope, not getting paid, and what underlined the client to keep on asking this from the consultant. What could they get out of it over the longer term that made them continue to do the work the client demanded?

From my experience I've found that this scenario often plays out in conditions where consulting organisations are desperate for “business”, and the client systems then leverage off the consulting organisation's position. I should clarify this perception as it may influence the way I interpret this narrative!

### **Focused Code Memo**

From the naïve reading phase of the analysis of this narrative, strong themes developed. In this phase of the analysis, where I now start to sort, compare and synthesise the data, the following emerged:

- This particular experience of a client-consultant relationship was greatly influenced by insufficient project scoping, management and governance, which had a definite impact on the consultant's perceived role definition, both the client

and consultant's meaning attached to promises made during the project, and the client expectations of project deliverables.

- It lead to certain understanding of exchanges in the relationship (promises made that were not directly linked to this project for work conducted on this project), which governed certain behaviours from the consultant (just kept on doing what the client asked), and the client "demanding" additional work to be done.
- All this finally had an impact on the consultants' interest in the project.

## **Literature Memo**

When consulting literature, most of what is reflected in narrative 2 relates to the unwritten dimensions related to the Psychological Contract, defined as perceived role definition, belief in reciprocal mutuality, and unwritten expectations.

Perceived role definition this relates to a concept called perceived role definition, which can be defined as "what the individual believes he or she has agreed to". It refers to the image or idea created by interpreting what their role means that will determine their behaviour.

Belief in reciprocal mutuality relates to the belief that one party will reciprocate the behaviours of the other in one way or another. It relates to the individual's understanding of explicit and implicit promises regarding employee contributions for organisational inducements.

Unwritten expectations refer to the "boundary" which guides individual actions and behaviours within the client-consultant relationship.

Finally, the statement made "by this stage of the project our engineers started losing interest in the project" indicated to me that there was some sort of psychological reaction to the project. From literature, this indicates resistance, where the group or individuals in the group employ collective defence mechanisms to contain anxiety or some sort of unwanted consequence pertaining to a situation.

## **Conceptual Category Memo**

Semi-structured interview conversation and question topics:

In your narrative you elaborated on aspects that I "coded" as "insufficient project scoping, management and governance". This was a strong theme that emerged from your narrative. Why did you continue to do work that was out of scope, not getting paid, and what motivated the client to keep on asking this from you?. What could you get out of it over the longer term that made you continue to do the work the client demanded?

From my experience I've found that this scenario often plays out in conditions where consulting organisations are desperate for "business", and the client systems then leverage off the consulting organisation's position. Was this the case on this project?

From your narrative, a strong link between explicit and implicit promises and what the client expected (demanded) emerged, i.e. where you stated “I feel it gave the client more reason to demand additional items to be included”. How did the fact that you were promised further project cause the client to demand additional out of scope items? What was the client perception on this?

Not meeting client expectations negatively impacted the client-consultant relationship. I.e. “They were not happy with the way the interface was done which caused a total rethink and re-engineering of the software”, “Systems that were installed exactly the same as at the first site that was used as a guideline had to be totally re-engineered”. How did this impact the client-consultant relationship, meaning what dimensions of the relationship was impacted?

Other than what we’ve talked about thus far, I would like to ask you if there were any psychological factors determining individual behaviour. These would be things such as trust and internal commitment?

Something really interesting came from one of the examples of behaviours you described in your narrative, in your words “by this stage of the project our engineers started losing interest in the project” From literature, this is the type of behaviour resulting from psychological defence mechanisms aimed to protect one from experiencing fear and anxiety. In specific, where people start losing interest, it refers to a term called “resistance”, where the group or individuals in the group employ collective defence mechanisms to contain anxiety or some sort of unwanted consequence pertaining to a situation.

What is your perception of this?

## **Narrative 3: Comments and Memos**

### **Naïve Memo**

This narrative is more a project description than a narrative on the dimensions that influenced the client-consultant relationship.

### **Initial Code Memo**

Could only discern two different codes, “Perceived role” (the text covered his specific role / project position) and “External factors impacting the Client-Consultant relationship” (he focused on the external factors related to this project.

### **Focused Code Memo**

I wonder how big an impact these “third-parties” have on perceived role definition, belief in reciprocal mutuality, and unwritten expectations???

With this in mind, I revisited the first two narratives, and created a comment under “External factors impacting the Client-Consultant relationship”, stating what these external factors could be. The following were identified up to this point:

1. Third-party relationships with other client or consulting organisations;
2. Consultants from other consulting organisations working on the same project;
3. Other projects running in parallel
4. Key stakeholders in the form of i.e. governments, royal families etc.;
5. Stakeholder committees also referred to as project boards;
6. Context within which the project is implemented, i.e. different countries, different cultures, level of sophistication of local populations - UAE, language difficulties, quality of project resources to work with.

This lead me to change a previous “code family” created “Third-parties’ impact on the client-consultant relationship” and changed it to “External factors impacting the Client-Consultant relationship”.

Currently where I stand in relation to this, I have the distinct feeling that this “code family” may have an impact on the unwritten dimensions, underlying dimensions and unconscious processes. Will have to clarify through literature and in the semi-structured interview.

### **Literature Memo**

The literature review conducted thus far did not include information on external factors impacting the client-consultant relationship, and this step could as such not be completed.

During the semi-structured interview, the external factors impacting the client-consultant relationship will be explored, as well as it’s relation to the conceptualisation of the Psychological Contract between client and consultant as identified from literature.

## Conceptual Category Memo

Semi-structured interview conversation and question topics:

What became clear from your narrative is that there were many external factors impacting the client-consultant relationship on the wastewater and irrigation systems project you conducted in the UAE. These are some of the ones you mentioned:

1. Consultants from other consulting organisations working on the same project;
2. Other projects running in parallel
3. Key stakeholders in the form of i.e. royal families etc.;
4. Stakeholder committees also referred to as project boards;
5. Context within which the project was implemented, i.e. different cultures, level of sophistication of local populations - UAE, language difficulties, quality of project resources to work with etc..

What do you think was the impact thereof on your perceived role definition (In literature, this can be defined as "what the individual believes he or she has agreed to", and refers to the image or idea created by interpreting what their role means that will determine their behaviour.?)

What do you think was the impact thereof on the belief or reciprocal mutuality (In literature, this relates to the belief that one party will reciprocate the behaviours of the other in one way or another. It relates to the individual's understanding of explicit and implicit promises regarding employee contributions for organisational inducements)?

What do you think was the impact thereof on the unwritten expectations (the "boundary" which guides individual actions and behaviours within the client-consultant relationship) from both yourself and the client?

What do you think was the impact thereof on the underlying psychological factors that drive individual behaviour, such as trust and internal commitment? Do you think there are other underlying psychological factors that drive behaviour in the client-consultant relationship?

What do you think was the impact thereof on the unconscious processes active in the client-consultant relationship? These refer to individual defence mechanisms (i.e. projection and rationalisation), group defence mechanisms (dependency, resistance) and unconscious reactions (transference and counter-transference)?

## Narrative 4: Comments and Memos

### Naïve Memo

A loaded narrative with lots of information relevant to this study. The information is furthermore presented on different levels, i.e. organisational, team and individual, and also reflect the consultant's thoughts and feelings throughout the project.

I have furthermore been in very similar situations, and can identify with the consultant i.t.o. the emotions and frustrations that she has gone through, even the group dynamics she faced sound familiar. Awareness of my own feelings and emotions throughout the analysis of this narrative is crucial!

### Initial Code Memo

Just for clarification. In this narrative, "Admiral Chatterbox" is the Consultant's Client, and "Champion" is "Admiral Chatterbox's" Client.

The rest of the individuals in this narrative are the project team members.

From the narrative, several "new" codes emerged as aspects influencing the client-consultant relationship. These are:

1. Personal emotions and characteristics which include both the emotions and characteristics of the consultant (i.e. "excited and enthusiastic", "dazed and confused", "distracted, annoyed, confused and humiliated", also emotion reflected in words "My mandate is stripped from me and I have no way of managing risk, being proactive or facilitating the present" which reflects a "sense of hopelessness") and client (i.e. client conduct during meetings, wanting to be in "control", not wanting to accept "help")
2. Unwritten expectations, which as seen from the narrative can be quite a broad term, and can relate to several things, i.e.:
  - Expectations related to the project and project deliverables
  - Expectations related to the client
  - Expectations related to how the project team should conduct itself, and what professional conduct means in client interaction, non-verbal behaviour, and verbal behaviour. Also related to how meetings should be run etc.
  - Expectations related to the self (consultant in this instance)
3. The consultant's perception of the client. As seen in the narrative, this perception is not very favourable, i.e. he is not a good "communicator", "lack of direction", "lack of transparency", "lack of proper planning", "corrupt the team".

With regard to "External factors impacting the Client-Consultant relationship", the following were identified from the initial coding that also forms part of this aspect, and was added in addition to what was extracted from the previous narratives:

1. Change in client representative ("Champion" being replaced)
2. Availability of client to supply information (answering Stutter Steven's questions)

3. Project team dynamics and interaction between team members as it influences the consultant's perception and subjective interpretation of events
4. The consultant's mentor (in this case the Change Father) since that person will have an impact on the consultant's perception and subjective interpretation of events

It also became evident from this narrative that "insufficient project scoping, management and governance" played a crucial role in how the Psychological Contract develops, how the consultant's "Perceived role" influences how the consultant will behave, and how "expectations influencing the client-consultant relationship" impacted on the behaviour reflected in the narrative.

Additional aspects related to the consultant's individual psychological reaction (defence mechanisms) also became apparent.

### **Focused Code Memo**

On closer analysis of the narrative, relationships between the codes became apparent.

First, it is quite clear that "insufficient project scoping, management and governance" (the fact that they did not have a signed contract, and the way the project was being managed) escalated the impact that the "external factors impacting the Client-Consultant relationship" had on the client-consultant relationship, especially on the project team dynamics and interaction between team members.

"Insufficient project scoping, management and governance" together with the "external factors impacting the Client-Consultant relationship" in turn had a dramatic impact on all of the following:

- "Perceived role";
- "Perception of the client";
- "Unwritten expectations";
- "Expectations influencing the client-consultant relationship";
- "Trust impacting the effectiveness of the client-consultant relationship";
- "Trust required to meet clients' needs"; and
- All the "Defence mechanisms" noted.

Lastly, it seems that "Personal emotions and characteristics" was almost like a "catalyst" to the relationship, a "golden thread" determining individual behaviour, at times impacting positively (consultant), and times impacting negatively (client).

### **Literature Memo**

Due to the nature of this project, and the big impact that "Insufficient project scoping, management and governance" had on the client-consultant relationship, "Unwritten expectations" (from both the consultant and client) was a central theme in this narrative. The construction of unwritten expectations, and subsequent "expectation gaps" is a common topic in research on client-consultant engagement. Literature

describe “unwritten expectations” as expectations that evolve over time and act as a boundary guiding individual actions and behaviours within organisational relationships.

Literature on client-consultant relationships also identified the close link between perceived role definition, unwritten expectations and misalignment between client and consultant, as reflected in this narrative.

“Perception of the client” is furthermore described in literature as a result from individual perception and subjective interpretation.

Apart from personal emotions and characteristics being an intrinsic part of the individual, it also relates to what is described in literature as the individual’s “organisation-in-the-mind”. An individual’s “organisation-in-the-mind” are being informed by unconscious processes that link different activities and relations that do not exist outside the mind, but as a set of experiences held in the mind (Hutton et al., 1997:115; Ringer, 2002:152). This model gives rise to images, emotions, values and responses in oneself, which will drive behaviour in organisational systems (Hutton et al., 1997:114). To be explored in the semi-structured interview.

Lastly, the different types of defence mechanisms reflected in this narrative can be described as the following:

- Rationalisation, a defence mechanism whereby the individual uses "reasonable" explanations to justify behaviour to avoid certain consequences that may lead to anxiety, i.e. After this incident I am, more than ever, convinced that Admiral Chatterbox is only humering me, he’s not taking me seriously. He just wants me there as an administrative channel to The Change Father.
- Undoing, a defence mechanism whereby the individual unconsciously attempts to undo one act by performing another; i.e. where “Big Nose Betty were going on about the approval of criteria for certain policies” after she was told that the “Champions wants her off the project!”.
- Identification, when the individual alleviates anxiety by assuming the characteristics of behaviour of another object, i.e. “I’ve realised, is that I’m in exactly the same position as everyone around me. I didn’t think I was, but I am”.
- Projection, whereby the individual project onto an external object that which is internal and unacceptable. Projection is experienced subjectively as being real and forms the basis of our interpretations of events; i.e. “Anyhow, I walked out of that second meeting feeling that I’ve lost the first battle, and I got the distinct impression that Admiral Chatterbox thinks/feels that I am totally and utterly useless”

## **Conceptual Category Memo**

Semi-structured interview conversation and question topics:

From your narrative, I got a lot of in-depth information regarding your experience of the client-consultant relationship that you described.

Firstly, I noticed that something I coded as “insufficient project scoping, management and governance” (the fact that you did not have a signed contract, and the way the project was being managed) had a significant impact on the client-consultant relationship. It also had a big impact on the overall team, and client-consultant-team engagement (team dynamics).

The emphasis on the “team dynamics” reflected in your narrative brings me to the second very dominant theme, coded as “External factors impacting the Client-Consultant relationship”. The following were identified from your narrative as external factors:

1. Project team dynamics and interaction between team members as it influences the consultant’s perception and subjective interpretation of events
2. The consultant’s mentor (in this case the Change Father) since that person will have an impact on the consultant’s perception and subjective interpretation of events
3. Change in client representative (“Champion” being replaced)
4. Availability of client to supply information (answering Stutter Steven’s questions)

Other codes that emerged were:

- “Perceived role” - In literature, this relates to a concept called perceived role definition, which can be defined as "what the individual believes he or she has agreed to". It refers to the image or idea created by interpreting what their role means that will determine their behaviour.
- “Perception of the client” - "Perception of the client" is described in literature as a result from individual perception and subjective interpretation.
- “Unwritten expectations” - Literature describe "unwritten expectations" as expectations that evolve over time and act as a boundary guiding individual actions and behaviours within organisational relationships.
- “Expectations influencing the client-consultant relationship” – these are the expectations that are verbalised towards the other party during the client-consultant engagement, but which were not necessarily agreed upon during the “contracting” phase.
- “Trust impacting the effectiveness of the client-consultant relationship” and “Trust required to meet clients’ needs” – which refer to an underlying psychological factor that drive individual behaviour.
- “Defence mechanisms” such as
  - Rationalisation, a defence mechanism whereby the individual uses "reasonable" explanations to justify behaviour to avoid certain consequences that may lead to anxiety, i.e. After this incident I am, more than ever, convinced that Admiral Chatterbox is only humering me, he’s not taking me seriously. He just wants me there as an administrative channel to The Change Father.

- Undoing, a defence mechanism whereby the individual unconsciously attempts to undo one act by performing another; i.e. where “Big Nose Betty were going on about the approval of criteria for certain policies” after she was told that the “Champions wants her off the project!”.
- Identification, when the individual alleviates anxiety by assuming the characteristics of behaviour of another object, i.e. “I’ve realised, is that I’m in exactly the same position as everyone around me. I didn’t think I was, but I am”.
- Projection, whereby the individual project onto an external object that which is internal and unacceptable. Projection is experienced subjectively as being real and forms the basis of our interpretations of events; i.e. “Anyhow, I walked out of that second meeting feeling that I’ve lost the first battle, and I got the distinct impression that Admiral Chatterbox thinks/feels that I am totally utterly useless”

What I would like to explore in this semi-structured interview is the relatedness of these codes, meaning:

1. Did “Insufficient project scoping, management and governance” and “External factors impacting the Client-Consultant relationship” impact on the **unwritten dimensions** (“Perceived role”, “Perception of the client”, “Unwritten expectations” and “Expectations influencing the client-consultant relationship”), **underlying dimensions** (trust) and **unconscious processes** (defence mechanisms)
2. What was the impact of “Insufficient project scoping, management and governance” and “External factors impacting the Client-Consultant relationship” on the **unwritten dimensions** (“Perceived role”, “Perception of the client”, “Unwritten expectations” and “Expectations influencing the client-consultant relationship”), **underlying dimensions** (trust) and **unconscious processes** (defence mechanisms)
3. How did your “Perceived role” influence your “Unwritten expectations”? and then,
4. What was the impact of your unconscious processes on the underlying dimensions and unwritten dimensions?

Lastly, from your narrative, another unique aspect emerged which I coded as “personal emotions and characteristics”. It was almost like a “watermark” throughout the narrative. Now, apart from personal emotions and characteristics being an intrinsic part of the individual, it also relates to what is described in literature as the individual’s “organisation-in-the-mind”. An individual’s “organisation-in-the-mind” are being informed by unconscious processes that link different activities and relations that do not exist outside the mind, but as a set of experiences held in the mind. This model gives rise to images, emotions, values and responses in oneself, which will drive behaviour in organisational systems. What is your perception of this? Do you think that this “organisation-in-the-mind” is “real” in the client-consultant relationship, and that it gives rise to emotions and behaviours, or do you think that emotions and behaviours are embedded in the person and will therefore manifest the same in different context, the client-consultant relationship being one of them?

**NB – remember to still include this code in a Code Family after the semi-structured interview has been completed.**

## **Narrative 5: Comments and Memos**

### **Naïve Memo**

This narrative focused quite a bit on an explanation of the project, project resources, project requirements and project progress. However, there are new data also which relates to external factors that impact the client-consultant relationship, internal commitment and the client-consultant relationship as a success factor in achieving the required results.

### **Initial Code Memo**

Based on this narrative, I again revisited the “External factors impacting the Client-Consultant relationship” code, and added the following as a comment:

1. Organisation context (and organisation requirements);
2. Consultant's capability and expertise;
3. Specific legislative requirements (and standards)
4. Increase in project scope effectively incorporated into the project

The narrative also surfaced another concept, coded as “Internal commitment of the consultant to the project” indicative that this is a dimension that will influence the client-consultant engagement; i.e. “In this case a large grey area existed between the two parties and this is where internal commitment was relied upon. Thus, we relied on the Consultant’s commitment to the project, and his willingness to adapt to our discipline”.

Based on this narrative, I again revisited the “Insufficient project scoping, management and governance” code, and would hereby want to make a note that it also includes whether the project is geared towards addressing the real client requirements, that the solution offered is in fact what the client need!

The narrative also reflected on specific group behaviours, coded as “Defence mechanism by group”, i.e. “Impatience, despondency and even aggression crept into the group”.

Quite interestingly, this narrative also referred to the code “Client-consultant required actions which will “scope” the nature of the Psychological Contract” (as in Narrative 1), i.e. “Additional meetings, visits and daily explanations and training strengthened the relationship of trust and pulled both teams through the project”. They deployed an action which impacted on the trust in the relationship, which helped to “pull” the client and consultant through the project.

The narrative also provided another code “Emphasis on the client-consultant relationship as contributing factor to success”, i.e. The sustainability of the system depends on the relationship between the Client and the Consultant and not only on the requirement and the product” and “this project also proved that one of our treasured our values, namely that all consultants are part of the service we provide to our clients, is one of the corner-stones of our successes and for job satisfaction”, which confirm the importance of tending to this relationship in order to achieve

success, seeing it as just as important as adhering to contractual agreements and designated project plans.

### **Focused Code Memo**

From the Initial codes, and in comparing them, there wasn't much more that emerged from this narrative. One thing did trigger my attention, and I am sure that I've interpreted it correctly, since I've been in a similar situation, where I started to feel anxious in circumstances where the project was bedded in uncertainty.

Upon closer inspection, the phase "This however caused great anxiety during the early stages", (initially coded as "Personal emotions and characteristics") in the context of "Thus, we relied on the Consultant's commitment to the project, and his willingness to adapt to our discipline. *This however caused great anxiety during the early stages.* Questions were asked such as, Will it be finished in time, because Company SS was still experiencing growth and pressure from clients forced by legislation and quality standards to use facilities like ours?. Will it be what we asked for? Will what we asked for be what we needed?" indicated to me not a personal emotion or characteristic, but to an unconscious reaction to the uncertainties they were facing during the initial phases of the project. A new code "Unconscious reaction" emerged.

I will also check this interpretation in the semi-structured interview.

### **Literature Memo**

Review of the literature on client-consultant relationships did highlight internal commitment as an underlying dimension pertaining to the Psychological Contract. From literature, internal commitment relates to client identification, psychological ownership, and a spirit of team play, which is needed to achieve success. Internal Commitment refers to the degree to which individuals feel emotionally attached to the project and governs the productivity of the individual in the client-consultant relationship.

With regard to client requirements as part of project scoping, management and governance, I would have to consult literature on this, determine how much a part it is during the "contracting" phase!

The "unconscious reaction" identified ("This however caused great anxiety during the early stages") can be referred to as transference. Transference refers to the displacement of patterns of feelings, thoughts and behaviour onto other objects involved in a current interpersonal relationship. Transference reactions in clients are generated by the organisational context (in this study coded as "External factors impacting the Client-Consultant relationship") which during the phase referred to in the narrative was characterised by uncertainty, various different aspects impacting on each other, all that had to be considered in this project.

The "Defence mechanism by group" identified in this narrative relates to what is described in literature as resistance, where the group employ collective defence

mechanisms, such as denial (despondency) and displacement (aggression) to contain anxiety.

Finally, the code “Emphasis on the client-consultant relationship as contributing factor to success”, is directly aligned with research on the success factors pertaining to client-consultant engagement. The above can be grouped into the existing Code Families.

### **Conceptual Category Memo**

Semi-structured interview conversation and question topics:

Your narrative highlighted a couple of aspects, coded as “External factors impacting the Client-Consultant relationship”. These were:

1. Organisation context (and organisation requirements);
2. Consultant's capability and expertise (and familiarity with your discipline);
3. Specific legislative requirements (and standards) forced onto clients; and
4. Increase in project scope effectively incorporated into the project (the new possibilities to enhance operations)

Throughout your narrative, I sensed that these had quite a big impact on the project, and on your experience of the project. At one stage you even wrote “This however caused great anxiety during the early stages. Questions were asked such as, Will it be finished in time, because Company SS was still experiencing growth and pressure from clients forced by legislation and quality standards to use facilities like ours?. Will it be what we asked for? Will what we asked for be what we needed?”. At first, I interpreted it as an emotional reaction, but following further analysis, there was evidence that this was instead an unconscious reaction that often occurs in client-consultant relationships. This unconscious reaction is known in literature as transference, the displacement of patterns of feelings, thoughts and behaviour. Transference reactions in clients are generated by the organisational context (in this study coded as “External factors impacting the Client-Consultant relationship” referred to above – read through them again). What is your perception of this? Was it an emotional reaction, or could it perhaps have been the displacement of feelings regarding the uncertainties of these external factors which were transferred onto the project?

Your narrative was furthermore the first to comment on internal commitment. You stated that “In this case a large grey area existed between the two parties and this is where internal commitment was relied upon. Thus, we relied on the Consultant’s commitment to the project, and his willingness to adapt to our discipline”. In this context, how would you define internal commitment? What would the impact of internal commitment be on the behaviour of the consultant?

In your narrative, you also commented on trust by saying, “trust played an ever increasing role” and “Additional meetings, visits and daily explanations and training strengthened the relationship of trust and pulled both teams through the project”. How would you define trust? What would the impact of trust be on the behaviour of both the client and the consultant?

In your opinion, what other aspects have an impact on client and consultant behaviour?

Finally, I just wanted to share this with you...your statements “The sustainability of the system depends on the relationship between the Client and the Consultant and not only on the requirement and the product” and “this project also proved that one of our treasured our values, namely that all consultants are part of the service we provide to our clients, is one of the corner-stones of our successes and for job satisfaction” is directly confirmed in literature and the reason for why I embarked with this research.

## Narrative 5: Comments and Memos

### Naïve Memo

A narrative with a lot of information on the relatedness of some of the codes identified in other narratives. Would require in-depth analysis, and checking with the participant if the relations created are in fact how he perceived it to have happened.

### Initial Code Memo

Based on this narrative, I again had to revisit the “External factors impacting the Client-Consultant relationship” code, and added the following as a comment:

1. Specific project requirements, i.e. “we had to represent the progress of the artwork on screen, from conception to fruition as the narrative runs its course, and secondly, a sizable portion of the film took place in his apartment, which obviously had to look like the apartment of an artist”

Even during initial coding, a central theme related to “Expectations influencing the Client-Consultant relationship” and “unwritten expectation” emerged.

I created a new code “Consultant work ethic and performance” as it seemingly had a significant impact on the relationship in this narrative as seen in the following: “other, smaller elements were also compromised by her work ethic and performance, or the lack thereof. The production period became a psychological nightmare, with the director and I demotivated by her low standards.”

“Faith” was coded as a concept to explore in the semi-structured interview; “I put too much faith in her capabilities”.

“Internal commitment” was referenced to.

Initial analysis of the narrative showed that central themes to this narrative are “Expectations influencing the client-consultant relationship”, “Perceived role”, “Personal emotions and characteristics”, and “Consultant work ethic and performance”.

### Focused Code Memo

Even in the first four paragraphs of this narrative, several dimensions can be identified, and the relatedness between these dimensions impacting this relationship became clear.

1. Specific **expectations** already emerged during the initial meeting, indicated by how “impressed” the client was with the consultant’s CV and showreel.
2. The client also had a very clear “**Perceived role**” of the consultant in mind, i.e. “the director and I decided there and then that she would not only consult on the production, but oversee all implementation pertaining to the look and feel of the production”. This “Perceived role” further led to specific expectations being placed on the consultant.

3. The statement, “As a result of her impressive CV and showreel, both the director and I felt confident in her capabilities. We both had high expectations of her”. This is two very loaded sentences, and is a good example of how an **unconscious reaction** (transference, the displacement of patterns and feelings, thoughts and behaviour onto a person involved in a current interpersonal relationship based on some past experience) contributed to the expectations transferred onto the consultant. It must however be noted that there was reasonable “proof” to do this based on the CV and showreel provided by the consultant.
4. The narrative continued into the next sentence, and established sense of reciprocal mutuality as a dimension, i.e. “Because of her expertise, I agreed to compensate her with remuneration that was well above industry standards”, where the client almost instantaneously held up the belief that he will compensate the consultant in line with the perception he had on what she will deliver.

As the narrative continues, it is evident that the consultant used excuses (in the form of rationalisations) which the client accepted since it was in line with what he “wanted to hear”, meaning it was consistent with his perception of her capability and grounded in trust (based on his expectation of her capability to deliver, and compensation he paid her).

The narrative furthermore reflected a definite relation of “personal emotions and characteristics” to the Psychological Contract. The client’s emotions resulting from his perceived role, and expectations from the consultant not being met (“disturbed”) and the personal characteristics displayed by the consultant (“not delivering”, “incongruity between her remuneration and work performance”) had a definite impact on their relationship. Other personal emotions and characteristic from the client reflected in words “there was nothing left to do” which reflects a “sense of hopelessness”, and personal characteristics “heart-to-heart”.

There was furthermore a link indicated between “perceived role” and “personal emotions and characteristic” as indicated in the following; “Furthermore, production quality reflects on the capability of the producer to secure required resources for each individual on the core production team. For these two reasons, I felt like a failure as a producer.”

The client and director also deployed group defence mechanisms to alleviate anxiety, which lead to the consultant continuing with what she was doing (in this instance, not doing).

The aspect identified as “Consultant work ethic and performance” as seen in “other, smaller elements were also compromised by her work ethic and performance, or the lack thereof. The production period became a psychological nightmare, with the director and I demotivated by her low standards” also indicate a clear link to personal emotions and characteristics. Comparing this new code “Consultant work ethic and performance” with the code “Client-consultant required action which will scope the nature of the Psychological Contract” indicate a lot of parallels in the impact thereof on individual perception and subjective interpretation, as well as the

underlying psychological factors and defence mechanisms and unconscious reactions it “creates”. As such, I will group these together in the Code Family.

“Faith” was brought in as a concept to explore in the semi-structured interview; “I put too much faith in her capabilities”.

A final note on “Unwritten expectations”. Again, these are seen here as those type of expectations that you do not really verbalise, and even if you verbalise them, it is fairly “grey”, i.e. “She presented herself as a professional and I expected as much” (professional) and “I expect nothing less from my regular production teams and would commonly appeal to their integrity, sense of self and artistic pride” (integrity, sense of self, artistic pride).

### **Literature Memo**

Based on literature, I will group “Faith” together with trust as an underlying dimension related to the Psychological Contract (underlying psychological factor that drive behaviour and the belief of it resulting in having a beneficial effect). Will investigate this link with the final literature review.

The narrative commented on internal commitment. Literature categorises internal commitment as an underlying dimension pertaining to the Psychological Contract. Internal commitment relates to psychological ownership and a spirit of team play, which is needed to achieve success. Internal commitment refers to the degree to which individuals feel emotionally attached to the project and governs the productivity of the individual in the client-consultant relationship.

In line with literature, this narrative indicated a strong link between “perceived role definition”, “belief in reciprocal mutuality” and “unwritten expectations” (also “expectations influencing the client-consultant relationship”), and also provided examples on how underlying dimensions or psychological factors such as trust relates to expectations.

This narrative really provides a good example of how existing literature define trust (trust is a psychological state, not a behaviour. It comprises the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive interpretation of the motives of others, and the belief that the individual will be treated fairly. Despite the consultant failing “to represent important deliverables and also failed to show up at important production meetings”, the client accepted vulnerability based upon positive interpretation of her motives, and the belief in her “impressive CV and showreel”, and that he will be treated in line with what remuneration he is paying her (treated fairly).

The narrative also indicates the interplay between individual and group defence mechanisms, as well as unconscious reactions such as transference. The following became apparent:

- Rationalisation - In literature, this can be defined as rationalisation, a defence mechanism whereby the individual uses "reasonable" and "acceptable" explanations to justify unacceptable behaviour.

- Transference – In literature this refers to the displacement of patterns of feelings, thoughts and behaviour onto other objects involved in a current interpersonal relationship. Transference reactions in clients are generated by the organisational context (in this study coded as "External factors impacting the Client-Consultant relationship")
- Resistance - In literature this is where the group employ collective defence mechanisms, such as denial ("despondency", "reassured ourselves") and displacement ("aggression") to contain anxiety.

The relation of “personal emotions and characteristics” to the Psychological Contract need to be investigated in the final literature review.

### **Conceptual Category Memo**

Semi-structured interview conversation and question topics:

In previous narratives, I identified what I coded as “Client-consultant required action which will scope the nature of the Psychological Contract”. These were aspects such as two-way communication, alignment of values, upholding confidentiality etc. In your narrative, a strong theme emerged which I coded “Consultant work ethic and performance”, i.e. “other, smaller elements were also compromised by her work ethic and performance, or the lack thereof. The production period became a psychological nightmare, with the director and I demotivated by her low standards” and “When I got there, the apartment looked generic, as if dressed by an amateur film maker and the artwork was not prepared in stages as per the script, but completed. Furthermore, the artwork was anything but a work of art. It comprised of printed photos, with the white border of the A4 paper still showing, pasted on cardboard boxes. It looked like something a first-year film student would concoct. Needless to say, I was upset, angry, disappointed and hurt”. Based on the impact that the consultant’s “work ethic and performance” had on individual perception and subjective interpretation (expectations), the underlying psychological factors (trust), as well as defence mechanisms (rationalisation) and unconscious reactions (transference), I grouped it together with the code “Client-consultant required action which will scope the nature of the Psychological Contract”. What is your perception of this? Do you think that consultant work ethic and performance have an impact on all of these dimensions mentioned?

From your narrative, another unique aspect emerged which I coded as “personal emotions and characteristics”. It was almost like a “watermark” throughout the narrative (i.e. “I was distraught”, “I felt like a failure as a producer”, “with the director and I demotivated by her low standards” and then also aspects described such as “heart-to-heart” which indicates a personal characteristic. Now, apart from personal emotions and characteristics being an intrinsic part of the individual, it also relates to what is described in literature as the individual’s “organisation-in-the-mind”. An individual’s “organisation-in-the-mind” are being informed by unconscious processes that link different activities and relations that do not exist outside the mind, but as a set of experiences held in the mind. This model gives rise to images, emotions, values and responses in oneself, which will drive behaviour in organisational systems. What is your perception of this? Do you think that this “organisation-in-the-

mind” is “real” in the client-consultant relationship, and that it gives rise to emotions and behaviours, or do you think that emotions and behaviours are embedded in the person and will therefore manifest the same in different context, the client-consultant relationship being one of them?

I would like us to explore the concept of expectations a bit more. From your narrative it was evident that you had certain expectations from the consultant based on the role she had to fulfil in the team. Then you also had some expectations of her that had more to do with “personal conduct” almost, such as “She presented herself as a professional and I expected as much” and “I expect nothing less from my regular production teams and would commonly appeal to their integrity, sense of self and artistic pride”. Where do you think these type of expectations come from, and do you think there is any relation to it in terms of what we just talked about as “organisation-in-the-mind”?

To delve a little deeper into the narrative. The statement, “As a result of her impressive CV and showreel, both the director and I felt confident in her capabilities. We both had high expectations of her”. This is two very loaded sentences, and is a good example of how an unconscious reaction (transference, the displacement of patterns and feelings, thoughts and behaviour onto a person involved in a current interpersonal relationship based on some past experience) can contribute to the expectations transferred onto the consultant. What is your perception of this. Do you think it possible that you unconsciously transferred expectations and behaviours onto her?

Another example of an unconscious process described in your narrative; “She reassured us, however, that it was because she was busy preparing the artwork, which was, after all, the most important visual signifier in the film” can be referred to as rationalisation - In literature, this can be defined as rationalisation, a defence mechanism whereby the individual uses "reasonable" and "acceptable" explanations to justify unacceptable behaviour. Do you think she employed this defence mechanism in your relationship? If so, how did it impact your relationship?

As a “group”, the narrative also reflected a “group defence mechanism” as seen in “However, both of us reassured ourselves that she was one of the best in her field and that she would deliver when the Production stage commenced”. Literature refers to this as resistance (where the group employ collective defence mechanisms, such as denial ("reassured ourselves") to contain anxiety. What is your perception of this?

Then lastly, you referred to “Internal commitment” at one stage, “I expected her to at least then compensate by having internal integrity and commitment”. What did you mean with this? What is the meaning that you attach to the concept internal commitment?

## Semi-structured Interview 1: Comments and Memos

### Interview Memo

Addressed all the questions I wanted to ask, areas to clarify, and links to explore. The participant confirmed the codes and relations from the analysis of his narrative, and further additional information also emerged.

This was a very relaxed and “sociable” interview. The participant did however “jump” from one topic to the next quite a bit which made it a little difficult for me to keep track with trying to understand the relatedness between the concepts / dimensions we were exploring. We did however create a lot of meaning on the dimension of trust, or trustworthiness, and some really interesting aspects emerged from the participant’s experiences on how trust and trustworthiness relates to each other, how it is established within the relationship, and how it links to expectations.

We also co-constructed the concept of trust as “I must be trustworthy for some else to trust me, someone else must be trustworthy for me to trust them”, and its relationship with expectations and intentions.

Another key concept that emerged, “intentions”, came through strongly, and the importance of the client and consultant to understand each other’s intentions to build a successful relationship were emphasised. I could identify with this strongly as I always try to understand another person’s intentions in understanding his or her behaviour (not only in work, but in life in general). When I then form an opinion (judgement) on the person’s intentions as positive (directed at the greater good) I then tend to trust, respect and “give” to that person.

Lastly, the participant’s personal characteristics (personality) came through quite strong in the interview. He is a very open and direct individual, will “say things as they are”, will ensure that others know where they stand with him, and tend to focus on clarifying understanding and expectations between himself and others. That seem to have had a big impact on the relationship also, always ensuring that everyone in the team are on the same page.

### Initial Code Memo

New codes emerged:

- Perception of self (how the individual perceive him / herself, i.e. “when I do the talking I am always ready [laughs]”, “I normally kick up a big storm if I don’t like things”).
- External factors causing uncertainty, and in this instance, the client requirements, the consultant not being familiar with the client discipline and the nature of the project caused “the unknown is so big, or so, so unknown”, “created the question mark”.
- Containment: a member of the client system “she took all the stress related to what she’s doing, because nobody wanted to help her. So, she more or less had to do it alone with her team, not really... She couldn’t integrate so well.

She couldn't integrate so well, but in retrospect, what she did was the right thing. She took complete ownership and full responsibility until the system was rolled out." The concept of containment was clarified in the interview and the impact thereof on the project confirmed.

- Successful project scoping, management and governance: in the narratives analysed this aspect manifested negatively, and in this interview, the individual who became the project "champion" actually managed to ensure effective project scoping, management and governance, needed to ensure success.
- Trustworthiness: related to the whole concept of trust.
- Intention: also related to trust, but then expectations also

### **Focused Code Memo**

This interview indicated definite links or indicated the relatedness between various "open codes":

1. External factors impacting the Client-Consultant relationship → External factors causing uncertainty → personal emotions → anxiety → unconscious reaction (transference of the uncertainty onto the actual project team)
2. Perception of self → Personal emotions and characteristics
3. Unwritten expectations → Intention → Trust → Unwritten expectations

Internal commitment (taking psychological and project ownership and responsibility) was also a strong theme that emerged, which led to, firstly difficulty within the project team, but then later on had a very positive effect. The individual that took ownership was part of the client system, and the participant also explained her behaviour through a lens of her personal emotions and characteristics (that is the type of person she is, that is how she does things, and she had the skills and experience to do so). In this she also contained the situation.

I also changed a view codes (renamed some codes) to ensure that it reflects the essence of what is happening in the semi-structured interviews, the meaning that the participant attached to the experience he described. This is in line with what was intended with the semi-structured interviews, to CLARIFY!!

### **Literature Memo**

From the narrative it was clear that the client's "perception of self" strongly relates to what came from the literature review as unwritten dimensions (those aspects that result from individual perception and subjective interpretation)

Other concepts to explore during theoretical sorting and integration are: Perception of self, the psychological impact of uncertainty and containment within the client-consultant relationship.

From literature, the following emerged, which were reaffirmed in this semi-structured interview: "If trust is present, people can spontaneously engage in constructive interaction, share information and make decisions without pondering who is formally responsible for problems, and who is going to be held accountable. Trust is vital for

bringing about farther-reaching cooperative processes, and the more interdependency there is between individuals, the more trust is required so as to achieve a productive working relationship (Kadefors, 2004:176).”

Literature furthermore indicated a strong link between trust and unwritten expectations, more so in the client-consultant relationship than in that of the employer-employee relationship. This link was also confirmed in this interview.

### **Conceptual Category Memo**

“Perception of self” as a “new code” following the semi-structured interview was included in the Code Family “Unwritten dimensions related to the Psychological Contract” as it strongly impacted the subjective interpretation of the client-consultant relationship, i.e. “I can’t distinguish between the two. That’s why I have a problem with it.”. The researcher subsequently also revisited the narratives, and changed some codes to “Perception of self”.

Based on literature, “Trustworthiness” and “Intention” was linked into the Code Family “Underlying dimension related to the Psychological Contract”.

Still need to link “Containment” and “External factors causing uncertainty” to a Code Family once theoretical sorting and integration is completed.

I also changed the Code Family previously called “Insufficient project scoping, management and governance” to just “Project scoping, management and governance” so as to include both the insufficient and successful side of it.

## Semi-structured Interview 2: Comments and Memos

### Interview Memo

I really enjoyed this interview, and a great sense of reciprocity between the researcher and the participant were established which facilitated the co-construction of meaning. On a high level, the interview confirmed the codes established from the narrative, and then focused mainly on the concept identified as organisation-in-the-mind.

The researcher has most definitely guided most of the conversation, however with the participant contributed tangible examples from her experience in working in the context of organisational learning theatre (comparing organisation-in-the-mind with the stage, and the character). Some of the conversation however seemed to have gone around in “circles” as meaning was being created. Will leverage from existing literature to further clarify the concept (during theoretical sorting and integration).

### Initial Code Memo

The beginning phases of the interview is characterised by a lot of clarification on the codes and concepts identified.

Following that, the conversation revolved around the participant’s unconscious processes, in specific, identification and projection. She confirmed the presence of those within the interaction with the project team, and also indicated self-awareness on the occurrence thereof in previous instances.

Yet again, the impact of group dynamics as coded as an external factor impacting the client-consultant relationship became apparent, as it had such a big impact on the participant’s experience and behaviour.

New codes emerged:

- “Perception of being lied to”
- “Personal background and frame of reference”
- “Integrity”

These codes proved to have a significant impact on the client-consultant relationship, as seen in: “Participant: Ja. But I didn’t know that would be the result at all. So, the moment I realised that... It’s as if these people lied to me, to my face.

Researcher: Ja. And why did you take it personal? Why did... Why did you have that thought: It was like these people lied to me, to my face?

Participant: Oh, I see the way I said it. Because I felt like the guy actually did lie to my face, [laughs] the Admirable Chatterbox. He told me in my face distinctly: “There is no way they’re not gonna take it. This is definitely gonna happen.” And I think it’s maybe based on the way I grew up or my personal value system or whatever, but I, when I say I’m gonna do something, I do it. And I’d rather not commit that commit and lie about it. So, I think it really just comes from my personal background and frame of, frame of reference. And,

ja. And just that emotional integrity that was instilled in me. Like, you don't say something and don't do it. It's just not right. So..."

- "Organisation-in-the-mind" which came from literature and the initial analysis of the narratives. The conversation also explored how it is being created, which falls outside the scope of this research study. As such, the focus in this research is mainly on whether organisation-in-the-mind has an impact on the Psychological Contract between client and consultant (confirmed in the interview), and how it is related to other concepts or dimensions identified.
- Unconscious processes, where the participant described it as the individual's character, that which really underlies everything.

### Focused Code Memo

A strong link between the following codes has emerged from this interview:

1. Defence mechanism, projection → Defence mechanism, assuming the same characteristics in another
2. Perceived role → Insufficient project scoping, management and governance → Personal emotions → Perception of self as seen in the following example: "I perceived myself to be a value-adding part of this team, but I weren't allowed to be that. And I think that was the frustration. So, at the end of the day my perception changed from being a value-adding part to being actually more of a hassle, more of a stumbling block, more of an intimidation".
3. External factors impacting the client-consultant relationship and Insufficient project scoping, management and governance → Perceived role → Unwritten expectations as seen in "Researcher: So, what you are saying is that, uh, the project governance and the external factors had an impact both on how you perceived your own role and what you expected from the project, as well as, how the other team members perceived your role and what they expected from you.

Participant: Yes. Yes.

Researcher: So, there was a direct link between...

Participant: Expectations and perceptions.

Researcher: Ja.

Participant: Yes, definitely."

4. External factors impacting the client-consultant relationship and Insufficient project scoping, management and governance → Perception of self and Perceived role as seen in "The way I perceived myself changed over time. The more I went to meetings and the more I kind of realised that this may not realise, the more I didn't feel valued there or I felt like it was a waste of time and my role is just actually a"
5. Starting point is unconscious as seen in "Researcher: And if you say it's a cycle...can you identify a starting point, in terms of, that it start with the unconscious and the projections, or did it start with the perceived role or the expectations? Participant: Unconscious..."

6. Trust → Perceived role → Defence mechanism, projection as seen in “Because, the fact is I had a trust that this thing... I was very positive that this was gonna work out. So, the moment that that trust was... When I realised that this might not happen, that’s when the trust broke. When the trust broke, I started to see myself in a different light. I started to say: “Oh, but my role at this stage is just to be here to show that there might be a Change Manager to keep their hopes up so that...” So, I was... I perceived myself then as a little cover-up. And I... Then I started to project. Then I started to think: “Okay, so you must think that I am here to waste everybody’s time.” Also in “The trust was a trigger in terms of the team, in terms of my perceived role for the team and for what I was supposed to do there.”
7. Defence mechanism, projection; Perceived role; and Perception of self closely related as seen in “You might think I’m an idiot now, but wait ‘till we start working, because you’ll see what I can do.”
8. Personal background and frame of reference → Perception of self → Integrity and Perception of being lied to.
9. Organisation-in-the-mind → Unconscious processes, as seen in “that might also be why I identified with him the best, because our organisation-in-the-mind is very similar. It, uh. I can even say exactly the same”.
10. Organisation-in-the-mind → unwritten and underlying dimensions!
11. Organisation-in-the-mind → perceived role as seen in “Participant: And then if you think about... What else is there? Uh. Ja, my perceived role is within this little world. Researcher: Mmmmm. [Agreeing] This organisation-in-your-mind. Participant: Yes. [Laughs] I mean I have to act a certain way and be a certain way and, in terms of all of those, in terms of the team, the Change Manager for the team, the Change Manager for the project and in terms of my relationship with the client, because all of those are on various levels, but all of those are, fit neatly into this picture of the organisation.”
12. Organisation-in-the-mind → unwritten expectations as seen in “Participant: ja, the “unwritten expectations” can signify everything that’s to do with the organisation-of-the-mind

## Literature Memo

Literature describes this “organisation-in-the-mind” identified from the narrative, and explored in the semi-structured interview, as a model, internal to oneself that is essentially unconscious. It consists of “what the individual perceives in his or her head” of how organisational activities and relations are organised, structured and connected internally. The individual’s “organisation-in-the-mind” are being informed by unconscious processes that link different activities and relations that do not exist outside the mind, but as a set of experiences held in the mind. This model gives rise to images, emotions, values and responses in oneself, which will drive behaviour in organisational systems.

Literature related to the code “Unconscious processes”, group defence mechanisms and unconscious reactions as one, defined as unconscious processes.

### **Conceptual Category Memo**

“Perception of being lied to” were included in the Code Family “Unwritten dimensions related to the Psychological Contract” as it relates to individual perception and subjective interpretation.

“Personal background and frame of reference” and “Integrity” were included in the Code Family “Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract for these are underlying aspects that drive individual behaviour and beliefs, and inform the perceptions and interpretations of the individual.

Based on literature (organisation-in-the-mind, being informed by unconscious processes this model gives rise to images, emotions, values and responses in oneself, which will drive behaviour in organisational systems), as well as the relatedness of organisation-in-the-mind to other aspects as identified in the semi-structure interview, the researcher grouped it under the Code Family “Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract”. However, the semi-structured interview positioned it as informing trust, personal emotions and characteristics etc. thus, it can be interpreted as the foundation of the underlying dimensions! The bottom-line as seen in the participant’s analogy that the “stage” (the organisation-in-the-mind) informs the unwritten and underlying aspects, and the character (unconscious processes) are “that is you in that world” (organisation-in-the-mind).

Furthermore, underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract are defined from literature as “the underlying psychological factors that drive individual behaviour and the belief of it resulting in having a beneficial effect”. The researcher reviewed this definition based on the information received from this semi-structured interview, and changed it to only “the underlying psychological factors that drive individual behaviour and beliefs”, because the belief of it resulting in having a beneficial effect was not evident, but rather the belief in what the relationship require to be successful.

Created a “higher level” Code Family to reflect literature related to the code “Unconscious processes”, which group defence mechanisms and unconscious reactions as one. As such, the two previously independent Code Families, “Defence mechanisms” and “Unconscious reactions” are now sub families under “Unconscious processes”.

## Semi-structured Interview 3: Comments and Memos

### Interview Memo

This semi-structured interview went well, and delivered a lot of in-depth information. The client did however focus quite a bit on the internal organisation more so than on the client-consultant relationship, and I consistently had to guide her back to that specific context.

The semi-structured interview furthermore helped to clarify a lot of linkages between codes that emerged from the narrative, and also added more information, especially on individual values and how it relates to the client-consultant relationship. It also helped to bring the organisation's point of view into the client-consultant relationship, helping to understand this relationship from a bigger system point of view (perhaps because the participant is the MD of the organisation, and therefore comes from the position of the organisation as a whole, and not just a client in various client-consultant relationships). This furthermore relates to a key aspect to be considered in this research, stated in Chapter 2 as "the researcher to consider the impact of the organisation as a system on the client-consultant relationship".

This being said, the participant being the MD of the organisation, the researcher therefore has to consider the participant's ontological and epistemological position in relation to the information provided.

Co-construction of meaning again occurred as we spoke about the concept of organisation-in-the-mind.

### Initial Code Memo

Almost immediately on clarification on some of the codes / themes that emerged from the narrative, new codes emerged:

- "Organisation as a system impacting the client-consultant relationship" as seen in "it is important that the consultant understands what the business is all about" and "Uh. Apart from the statement, the mission statement, etcetera, what is this place really about?"
- "Effective contracting" as seen in "I would want to know that the person that I deal with is gonna give me advice on my business, has the same values".
- "Underlying factors" as seen in "Researcher: Uh. M, I couldn't help but think just now when we talked about honesty that our first bit of the conversation about values (integrity, passion, all those kind of things)...

Participant: Yes.

Researcher: So, something that happened in my thoughts just now is I almost see all of that (honesty, passion, integrity) almost as the key to switch and switch off, switch on and switch off trust.

Participant: Ja. You're right. Ja. I agree.

Also again a big emphasis on trust and personal values impacting the client consultant relationship.

This semi-structured interview also provided a good example of organisation-in-the-mind in “And I suppose it links in with the kind of business that you want”. It also emphasised the impact it has on individual behaviour, perceptive and interpretation (both the underlying and unwritten dimensions).

### **Focused Code Memo**

A strong link between the following codes has emerged from this interview:

1. Organisation as a system impacting the client-consultant relationship → “Effective contracting” → “Client-consultant required actions which will “scope” the nature of the client-consultant relationship” as seen in “Well, the way I see consulting, in terms of adding value to a business, uh, it is important that the consultant further consult and, uh, understands what the business is all about in order to, you know, to give a, an assessment and everything that follows, because, uh... And it’s not just the, sort of the, what you see, the structure, the, uh, you know, the environment, etcetera, etcetera. I think that’s what I was trying to say in terms of values. It’s really about the... What is it that this company really stands for? What is it that they have an objective to achieve? Uh. Is it about all stakeholders? Is it about only the shareholders? Is it about only the employees? Uh. Is it about only the client? You know. So... And the, and the dynamic. So, I, I think that very often with company values, it’s kind of something like that, that we put up. Uh. Something that the directors think about. And it’s what they would like to achieve. But, reality could be far removed, because values really are lived through the people. So, in order to understand what a, what a business really is about, I think, uh, the, the consultant would really have to understand what is the, the business, the client, the consultant’s client, uh, really trying to achieve? Uh. Apart from the statement, the mission statement, etcetera, what is this place really about? And if, if values are very strong, for instance, if, if it’s strongly, uh, leaning towards honesty, integrity, etcetera, then, from my perspective, I would want to know that the person that I deal with is gonna give me advice on my business, has the same values, you know”.
2. “Organisation as a system impacting the client-consultant relationship” → “Client-consultant required actions which will “scope” the nature of the client-consultant relationship” also seen in the above paragraph from the semi-structured interview. The organisation as a system with specific characteristics of its own, almost necessitates specific actions from both the client and consultant, specifically alignment of the consultant’s values to that of the client organisation.
3. Trust and “Personal values impacting the client-consultant relationship” as the client’s underlying psychological factors that drive individual behaviour → and then impacts on individual perception and subjective interpretation. The

participant then also linked passion and commitment to trust and integrity. All closely related from the participant's experience.

4. Buy-in and internal commitment as one concept clarified.
5. Honesty → Trustworthiness → emergence and existence of trust.
6. "Organisation as a system impacting the client-consultant relationship" → "Perception of the Client"
7. "Organisation-in-the-mind" → "Perception of self" and "Personal emotions and characteristics", as seen in Participant: "And I suppose it links in with the kind of business that you want. And I like to get them more, uh, more chances than just the first, uh, impression. Researcher: So, so, when people doesn't necessarily fit your organisation-in-the-mind, you will still give them the time of day...Participant: Ja."

## Literature Memo

There is quite a lot of literature available on the organisation as a system. In this semi-structured interview, the organisation system refers to the meaning of the participant as "what the business is all about, not just the structure, environment etc., but also in terms of its values, mission and objectives.". According to literature, the consultant enters this system through engaging with an individual, or individuals representing the organisation (defined in this research study as the client), which causes unconscious processes to infuse in the consulting relationship (Bullen, 2003:49). In this process, consultants join the very systems they are asked to provide a "service" to, and the client-consultant relationship becomes the primary means by which the consultant can influence that system. The consulting subsystem has its own life that is both conscious and unconscious, which relates to, and reflects the systems that it interacts with (Bullen, 2003:49). It was emphasised in this semi-structured interview that the organisation as a system plays a big role during the contracting phase of a project, and from literature, it is evident that the impact is quite big in considering that it relates to unconscious processes etc.

Need to explore personal values and the impact thereof on the client-consultant relationship in subsequent literature!

## Conceptual Category Memo

This semi-structured interview, together with existing literature indicated a strong link between "Client-consultant required action which will "scope" the nature of the Psychological Contract" and "Effective contracting", with "Effective contracting" included in the Code Family "Aspects that will "scope" the nature of the Psychological Contract".

"Organisation as a system impacting the client-consultant relationship" was linked to the Code Family "External factors impacting the client-consultant relationship" as, although the client-consultant relationship as a system is positioned within the larger

context of the organisational system (which the consultant enters into), it is still external to the actual client-consultant relationship.

Furthermore, as noted in the Focused Code Memo, that trust and personal values as the client's underlying psychological factors that drive individual behaviour and influences and then impacts on individual perception and subjective interpretation, a change was made in the Code Family "Unwritten dimensions impacting the client-consultant relationship". Initially the code "Personal values impacting the client-consultant relationship" was grouped under "Unwritten dimensions impacting the client-consultant relationship", but following analysis of Semi-structured interview 3, it was moved to "Underlying dimensions impacting the client-consultant relationship" as it is an intrinsic factor that drives individual behaviour, an underlying psychological factor as such.

Apart from personal values clustered under "Underlying dimensions impacting the client-consultant relationship", "Underlying factors" as the participant identified several things, honesty, trust, integrity, respect, commitment to be all related, influencing behaviour and influencing individual perception and subjective interpretation. Thus, between the unwritten and underlying, there is a two-way relationship in it impacting or relating to each other!!!

Up to this point, the researcher has not grouped "Personal emotions and characteristics" into any Code Family, but from this semi-structured interview, it showed to big part of both unwritten and underlying dimensions. Will be further explored.

## **Semi-structured Interview 4: Comments and Memos**

### **Interview Memo**

Throughout this semi-structured interview the researcher experienced an exhilarated level of energy as the content of the conversation were “loaded” with in-depth information, relatedness between codes identified in the various narratives, and meaning attached to the participant’s experience of the client-consultant relationship.

Topics that were covered in the conversation included unwritten dimensions, underlying dimensions and unconscious processes, emphasising its impact, from the consultant’s perception, on the client-consultant relationship.

Interestingly, once the semi-structured interview were transcribed, and the researcher again read through the data, the same level of meaning as experienced during the semi-structured interview, did not come through. This made the researcher aware that she was, during the interview, “listening for meaning”, and focused on the “sense” of the conversation through her experiences of working overseas, and being a consultant who also places a lot of emphasis on the “people” involved in projects.

The researcher also comes from a position where she reacts to others with whom she identifies strongly, where she feels “warmth” within the relationship, where she feels part of “something”, believes she has a specific “higher role” to fulfil. These type of unconscious processes, personal values and believe may therefore have served as a “filter” to really listen to other data and information that may have emerged, and also as a “creator” of meanings within the interview that may not have existed. As such, the subsequent coding of the data from semi-structured interview 4 will be done through constant reflection and heightened awareness.

### **Initial Code Memo**

The participant was very articulate in describing his relationship with the client, i.e. “quality relationship”; “no matter what went on, I could go and talk to him”, “It did to some extent come immediately, because on the first meeting that I had with him, we, there was warmth, there was just a feeling of warmth between the two of us”, “unity between me and him”.

The key in the analysis is to identify the dimensions that influenced the relationship that the participant described and to understand how they relate to each other.

Other codes strongly emphasised, all interrelated and impacting each other and the client-consultant relationship were:

- Unconscious reaction
- Defence mechanisms
- Perception of self
- Perception of client

- Trust
- Reciprocal exchange
- Unwritten expectations
- Internal commitment
- Personal values
- Perceived role
- Personal emotions and characteristics

### **Focused Code Memo**

Firstly, the content of the semi-structured interview indicates the following to have impacted on the nature of the consultant's relationship with the client (in sequence as identified from the data):

1. Unconscious reaction;
2. The consultant's perception of the Client;
3. The consultant's perception of self;
4. Defence mechanism, projection and defence mechanism, assuming the same characteristics in another;

And then

5. Trust

All this can be seen in the following "Participant: And I, I... The reason was never spoken, but I think that was the underlying thing that connected us. He was marginalised by being Iranian. I came from a, a long background of history in terms of my own life where I had been marginalised. I think we made an emotional... I think we first made an emotional connection.

Researcher: And you could identify with him and he with you.

Participant: He with me, ja. And so, it was a hugely successful thing because trust was established without really much effort."

Furthermore, the nature of the relationship, and the consultant's perception of the nature of the relationship then also had an impact on the following:

6. Reciprocal exchange → Unwritten expectations as seen in "So, what you are saying also that as a client, he helped you to manage the external environment in which the project had to be executed. Participant: Ja, he did, but he didn't really directly involve himself. He, he gave me the confidence to know that I could go and do it. But, I think that was the biggest thing. He would not necessarily go out and meet with, uh...", "I had his backing".
7. Commitment as seen in " Researcher: Uh. What impact did that have on your commitment to the program? Your...  
Participant: Total! Ja, no, I mean, I think that, uh, I fell in love with, uh, the project, with the country, with the people."

The participant also confirmed the existence and impact of unwritten and underlying dimensions on the Psychological Contract, as seen in “Researcher: A, a lot of the questions I had wanted to ask you was, very much, so, why then did you cope with these external factors and all of that? And from your answer now, I really got that something that I interpreted from, from my model, thus far, is that there are certain unwritten and underlying elements that will have an enormous impact on this client-consultant relationship.

Participant: Absolutely.

Researcher: And what you just explained to me is exactly those, what lies beneath what is being done on the surface.

Participant: And had you asked me that at the time... I mean, it's in the hindsight that I can see how all the, the bonding took place, really. Ja. I mean, uh... Ja, you know.”

The participant also confirmed the existence of unconscious processes and unconscious reactions, and the impact thereof on the client-consultant relationship as seen in the following “But, you know, it's quite interesting. We knew what each other felt, but we never shared it. I never shared how alienated I felt, why I felt myself to be not, so not well-connected with other people or whatever. I never mentioned it. And there are layers and layers to that, but I'm not gonna talk about it. But he also didn't have connection. I knew what it was, why, most of it. Cause I knew it was linked to not really being accepted by the community. But, it was never spoken about.”

### **Literature Memo**

This semi-structured interview reflected many of the dimensions found in literature on the client-consultant relationship. Refer to the descriptions related to the various codes used.

### **Conceptual Category Memo**

This semi-structured interview surely provided rich data, and emphasised the intricate relationship between the Code Families identified. Almost as though there isn't a specific starting point, but that all is interrelated, manifest together in different events within the relationship, and have specific “life-cycles”. No changes were made to the Code Families, however how it relates to each other as per the narratives and other semi-structured interviews, is now not so clear-cut anymore. All interrelated and impacting each other.

## **Semi-structured Interview 5: Comments and Memos**

### **Interview Memo**

During this semi-structured interview the conversation was very concrete in the sense that very little data were obtained regarding codes and Code Families on unwritten and underlying type of dimensions influencing the client-consultant relationship. The conversation circled around very tangible project elements, and it became evident that the consultant was engaging in the client-consultant relationship, and very much interpreted the nature of the relationship with the project agreement at the forefront, i.e. project scope (what is in scope and what is out of scope), project role (what is his role, and what is not his role) and project governance (escalation of project risks and issues) etc. Throughout the semi-structured interview the researcher probed, and tried to relate elements within the client-consultant relationship to other codes and Code Families which emerged from other narratives and interviews, but the conversation kept on going back to project scope, management and governance.

Now that I think back on it, it is quite evident that the ontological and epistemological positions of the participant and researcher is quite different, with the participant coming from an electronic engineering background where elements pertaining to projects are very much “black-and-white”, “right-or-wrong”, with the researcher coming from a psychological background where elements pertaining to projects are viewed very much from an unwritten, underlying and unconscious point of view. This viewpoint will be considered throughout the analysis of the data emerging from semi-structured interview 5.

The researcher furthermore clarified her interpretation of some of the information from the participant’s narrative, where she perceived it from a situation in which she previously had been. This resulted in subsequent changes to some of the initial codes from the participant’s narrative.

### **Initial Code Memo**

Again, as with the narrative, the data received focused mainly on the Code Family “Project scoping, management and governance”. This aspect impacted on:

- “Reciprocal exchange”
- “Perception of self”
- “Client expectations not met”
- “Personal emotions”
- “Perception of the client”

### **Focused Code Memo**

From the semi-structured interview, it became apparent that the consultant had a very clear sense of his role on the project (“Perceived role”) and he truly managed his relationship within the project, and also towards the client accordingly.

Also, it became evident that the participant's role was effectively scoped during the contracting phase, and he therefore knew exactly what to do, where to escalate project queries to and how to contribute towards sufficient project scoping, management and governance.

The consultant's "Perception of self" in relation to the "Perception of the client" also came through quite strongly, and was defined very much on a "service level agreement" level, however, he did make note of the impact it had on the client i.t.o the client's emotions.

Another link emerged in the consultant's unwritten expectations not being met, and losing interest because of losing that belief of reciprocal mutuality as seen in "Well, it's just the satisfaction of finishing the thing, you know. It... Knowing today I'm going there and I'm gonna sign this off. I'm gonna shake the, the client's hand and everybody's gonna be happy, which never happened".

Lastly, the participant furthermore added to the aspect coded as "Reciprocal exchange", which relates to the belief that certain contributions will be rewarded by the organisation or client in some way or another. This semi-structure interview however provided a different view on this, by saying that "the sooner you get it finished, the sooner you can start with something new, interesting", indicating that there is an individual inducement involved also, finishing this will ensure that I can move onto something more interesting, a psychological need that is being fulfilled.

### **Literature Memo**

Explore the individual inducement mentioned in the Focused Code Memo in literature.

### **Conceptual Category Memo**

No new themes or categories emerged from this semi-structured interview.

## Semi-structured Interview 6: Comments and Memos

### Interview Memo

Upon reflecting on this semi-structured interview, it became evident that the researcher had a big impact on the content of the conversation, asked a lot of guiding questions, and personally connected a lot of the dimensions mentioned in this participant's narrative, as well as other narratives and semi-structured interviews, without really allowing the participant to make those connections. As such, asking the participant to reflect on certain connections or linkages, confirm certain connections or linkages, instead of really making those connections or linkages himself. This being said there were however a strong link identified by the participant noted on the semi-structured interview as Parents → work history and expertise → capability of producer → perception of self → perceived role → emotions (feel good, success), psychological needs and emotions. The participant then related all this back to unwritten expectations and trust.

The researcher furthermore also identified strongly with the participant's situation (where the participant were to a very large degree dependent (researcher's word) on the deliverables of the consultant, and the consultant having as much "power" as the participant stated the case to be). This can be seen in "Researcher: If I, if I put myself in your shoes, if something the size of that, on which you are dependant, I would feel an immense amount of anxiety and anxiousness and anticipation for it to start to realise. And those elements would start to give rise to emotions such as "anger", "demotivated", those kind of things". This further contributed to the researcher "leading" the conversation, and also had a big impact on how the researcher interpreted the conversation.

Upon further thought and reflection, the researcher noted 3 things in relation to the above, to be considered in the analysis of this semi-structured interview:

- The researcher again experienced, as referred to in the Interview Memo of semi-structured interview 4, an "exhilarated level of energy" during this conversation, as the participant emphasised dimensions that relate to the researcher's own world view and perception of elements that greatly influences the client-consultant relationship. The researcher as such will attempt throughout the analysis to "stand back" and conduct rigorous analysis of the data (moving back and forth between the data and researcher's ontology and epistemology as Aguinaldo, Creswell and Ricoeur emphasised should be done)
- The researcher also experienced a feeling that she "has heard this before", and while listening to the participant's responses, compared other semi-structured interviews where the same information, dimensions and links where conveyed (specifically semi-structured interviews 2 and 4).
- This being the last semi-structured interview, with the researcher having gone through all the narratives and other semi-structured interviews, it makes sense to some degree that the information already collected, analysed and interpreted will have had an impact on the "guiding nature" of this semi-

structured interview. That the researcher was more involved in co-construction of meaning with the preceding semi-structured interviews, and with this one more involved in clarifying that meaning, and asking the participant to reflect on that meaning. However, the researcher will take a view during the analysis of this semi-structured interview to look beyond mere confirmations of previous codes, Code Families and links between codes and Code Families, and be open to any new information or themes that may have emerged.

### **Initial Code Memo**

Firstly, where the participant talks about the amount of “power” that the consultant had on the production, this was coded as “External factors impacting the Client-Consultant relationship” as the role the consultant played formed part of specific project requirements. As such, based on the nature of the production, what the consultant had to deliver was a crucial part that would have determined the success of the production, and was as such an intrinsic part of the project independent of the individual chosen to deliver on that. Interesting though is the client’s use of the word “Power”, and he then directly relates this “power” to the feelings experienced during the production.

### **Focused Code Memo**

The following links or relatedness between codes were identified:

1. Definite link between “External factors impacting the Client-Consultant relationship” and the nature and impact of “Personal emotions” experienced as seen in “the amount of power we gave he in the project made it possible for her to bring out those feelings in us” as well as subsequent data from the semi-structured interview.
2. Also, “External factors impacting the Client-Consultant relationship” → “Underlying factors”, “Unconscious processes” and “Unconscious reactions”, as seen in the participant’s use of words, “big psychological impact”, “big impact on the Psyche of everyone”.
3. “Perception of self” and “Personal characteristics” → “Personal emotions”, as seen in “Participant: Furthermore, if, uh, the anxiety, where that comes from, I think that’s interesting. I think it comes from an artistic place, because we’re an artistic kind of company. So, it comes from a place where we want to be proud of what we do. We want to look at the screen and say: “You know what, we did this. And we did it well.”
4. Strong links between and starting with “Personal background and frame of reference” → “Organisation-in-the-mind” → “External factors impacting the Client-Consultant Relationship (specifically the nature of the industry)” → “Perceived role” → “Perception of self” → “Personal emotions”, as seen in “Researcher: Now, in your context it’s slightly different. We might call it

“production-in-the-mind” or whatever the case might be. Uh. And I would like to explore that concept with you and just get your views on it.

Participant: Definitely. Uh. It, it comes from how I was raised, obviously, from, uh, the example I got from my parents about what you, how you, uh, carry yourself in any kind of environment and especially in a professional environment, how you are supposed to act, etcetera, etcetera. And then also my history as a Producer. I have shown that I am a more than capable Producer.

Researcher: Mmmm. [Interested]

Participant: So, in our industry especially, it's, your reputation is everything, because the industry is very small. So, I usually lay more claim, or, or put more emphasis on things that other Producers won't put emphasis on, like how to work with the team, how to motivate the team, etcetera, uh, you know, the psychological kind of content that I try to give to the production, uh, kind of, how the, how the group operates together, how the team feels, how everyone does their job and see it interact with someone else's job and how they are all, all interlinked. So, I try to give a big picture to people. And I see that as my responsibility, because of how I was raised, and also because of my reputation as a Producer. So, I want to maintain both of those in every production I do. And that gives me a sense of self as well, because it makes me feel good, if I have to be blunt. It makes me feel like, uh, (what's the opposite of a failure?) like a success”.

5. Also a strong link between “Organisation-in-the-mind” → “Unwritten expectations” → “Unconscious reaction” → “Perception of Consultant”, as seen in “Participant: Producer-in-the-mind. Uh. Definitely. That probably had a huge impact, uh, on how I felt when I saw someone else not doing their, their job. And also, my organisation-in-the-mind then came through in how I evaluated what she did. In other words, I maybe projected onto her what I felt I would've done in her situation, measured against my organisation-in-the-mind”.
6. “Expectations influencing the client-consultant relationship” → “Consultant work ethic and performance” as seen in “First of all, I think that I would like to just distinguish between, uh, between what she delivered, which to me is a sign of her lack of work ethic”. Also,
7. “Expectations influencing the client-consultant relationship” and “Unwritten expectations” → “Consultant work ethic and performance” as seen in “Participant: And I relate different to both. In terms of her work ethic, I expect... I obviously project onto her what I expect, because I would've done it in a certain way. But if I take myself out of it, it's not just me projecting. It is what is supposed to be expected of her, because I feel, even though it wasn't stipulated precisely in the contract, that it was still part of the agreement, verbal agreement. So it wasn't... So, in terms of her work ethic, uh, that also comes from my organisation-in-the-mind. Definitely. But, more than that, it comes from what I feel should be expected of everyone. But it, once again, maybe it's what I feel should be expected, not what everyone feels, or what someone else might feel should be expected of everyone”.
8. “Personal values” and the evaluation of the personal values of others

9. "Perception of self" and the perception of others as seen in "then, I would not have, if I'm now in that situation, where now I need to deliver, I would've done everything in my power to not, uh, to not mess it up. So, I would've done everything I could. So, all of that stuff I'm projecting onto her".
10. "Perceived role" → "Personal characteristics" → "Unwritten expectations as seen in "You know, if she was the Producer and I was in that position, I would've gone to her and said: "You know what, I'm struggling. This is what..." And put everything on the table, cause you can't deal with something if it's not on the table."
11. "Expectations influencing the client-consultant relationship" → "Client expectations not met" → "trustworthiness" (the consultant perceived as not trustworthy) as seen in "So, in, in terms of trust, as far as (I'm gonna handle them one-at-a-time), as far as written, or not written, verbal expectations, so, the stuff that we agreed upon verbally, before she signed the contract, that totally, uh, diffused my trust for her, the fact that she didn't deliver on those things, reason being that those are the things that she overtly lied to me about..." → "Perception of being lied to" as seen in "But there was no proof that, that we had that conversation, which is unfortunate. Uh. But anyway. So, those had a stronger reaction in terms of my trust towards her, because I felt that those were the places and the instances where she directly lied to me in my face, directly disobeyed me, etcetera. So, then, it becomes less and less as we carry on. Uh. I can have... I will also not trust someone if it's unwritten expectations or un-agreed expectations that: I had these expectations, I didn't, uh, communicate it to her, and then she didn't deliver on them, but that wouldn't have such a big impact on my trust-relationship with her".
12. "Integrity" → "Trustworthiness"
13. "Integrity" → "Work ethic"

## Literature Memo

Related to the terms used "psychological" and "psyche", literature would refer to underlying dimensions (psychological factors), and unconscious processes (which includes both defence mechanisms and unconscious reactions). As such, all three codes, "Underlying factors", "Unconscious processes" and "Unconscious reactions" were used when the participant referred to "psychological" and "psyche".

In literature, what the participant referred to as projection is in fact transference, as seen in "Participant: Producer-in-the-mind. Uh. Definitely. That probably had a huge impact, uh, on how I felt when I saw someone else not doing their, their job. And also, my organisation-in-the-mind then came through in how I evaluated what she did. In other words, I maybe projected onto her what I felt I would've done in her situation, measured against my organisation-in-the-mind". Transference refers to the displacement of patterns of feelings, thoughts and behaviour onto a person involved in a current interpersonal relationship.

The semi-structured interview also provided good examples of rationalisation and group defence mechanisms.

### **Conceptual Category Memo**

This semi-structured interview emphasised the relatedness between the dimensions identified as impacting or influencing the client-consultant relationship, driving the Psychological Contract.

As a consequence of this interview, and comparing the text to which code “Consultant work ethic and performance” was linked across narrative 6 and interviews 1, 3 and 6, it became apparent that this code actually speaks to two different dimensions. Firstly, Consultant work ethic, which, upon closer investigation, relates stronger to codes “Personal background and frame of reference”, “Integrity”, “Internal commitment to the project” etc. forms part of underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract, which impacts elements such as “Perception of the Consultant”, expectations etc.. Secondly, Consultant performance was found to relate stronger to “External factors impacting the Client-Consultant Relationship”, together with Consultant’s capability and expertise etc. As such, the initial code “Consultant work ethic and performance” was split into two, and related to the Code Families as described in the aforementioned paragraph.

A crucial thing that happened in this interview is clarification that the code “Personal emotions and characteristics” had to be split into two, “Personal emotions” and “Personal characteristics”. Subsequently, all previous text linked to this code were revisited, and the “split” realised in Atlas.ti in all narratives and semi-structured interviews. These two codes were then also linked to the Code Family “Underlying dimensions related to the Psychological Contract”, something that the researcher hasn’t been able to do till now.

Then the participant provided good information on aspects to include in the contracting phase of projects.

## APPENDIX B – Consent Form

### Informed Consent for Participation in an Academic Research Study Department of Human Resource Management

#### EXPLORATION TO THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT BETWEEN CLIENT AND CONSULTANT

Research conducted by:  
Miss. Y. Havemann (99093350)  
Cell: 073 7500 305

Dear Respondent

You are invited to participate in an academic research study conducted by Yolandi Havemann, a Masters student from the Department of Human Resource Management at the University of Pretoria.

The purpose of this study is to gain a collective understanding of those dimensions and processes that influence the client-consultant relationship that is not incorporated in written contractual agreements, but that impact profoundly on the outcome, productivity and effectiveness of that relationship. The aim with the study is to add value through providing a framework on the dimensions and processes at play in the client-consultant relationship, with the view that this framework will assist consultants to surface and interpret these dimensions, understand how it impact their relationship with their clients, and enable them to effectively manage the client-consultant relationship in future.

Please note the following:

- This study involves an anonymous written narrative and semi-structured interview. Your name will not appear on any documentation, and the information you provide will be treated as strictly confidential
- There are no known risks or personal benefits from participating in this study
- The results of this narrative and semi-structured interview will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. We will provide you with a summary of our findings on request.
- Your participation in, and contribution to this study is very important to us. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences.
- Please write the short reflective narrative as honestly and open as possible. This should not take more than approximately 60 minutes of your time.
- Once the content of your narrative has been analysed, you will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview with the purpose to collect focused and specific data to clarify conceptual themes and achieve theoretical saturation. This should also not take more than 60 minutes of your time.
- Please contact my supervisor, Ms. C. Olckers at her email address [chantal.olckers@up.ac.za](mailto:chantal.olckers@up.ac.za), if you have any questions or comments regarding the study.

Please sign the form to indicate that:

- You have read and understand the information provided above.
- You give your consent to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.

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**Participant's signature**

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**Date**

## APPENDIX C – Body of Consent Form Email to Participants

Dear ...,

With this email I would like to provide some information on my Masters dissertation, to be completed as part of my MCom Industrial Psychology degree, in order to ask you to consider participating in my research.

The purpose of the study is to gain a collective understanding of those dimensions and processes that influence the client-consultant relationship that is not incorporated in written contractual agreements, but that impact profoundly on the outcome, productivity and effectiveness of that relationship.

The aim with the study is to add value through providing a framework on the dimensions and processes at play in the client-consultant relationship, with the view that this framework will assist clients and consultants to surface and interpret these dimensions, understand how it impact their relationship, and enable them to effectively manage the client-consultant relationship in future.

The research will be conducted through qualitative methods, and should you decide to participate, you will be asked to:

1. Write a short reflective narrative, as honestly and open as possible, on your experience of an end-to-end consulting engagement, describing the:
  - Context in which this engagement occurred (i.e. type of project, level of interaction between client and consultant, collaboration required etc.);
  - Dimensions (factors or aspects) influencing or impacting on the relationship;
  - Processes (individual processes) that influenced that relationship.

The narrative should not take more than approximately 60 minutes of your time and can be emailed to the researcher.

2. Once the content of your narrative has been analysed, you will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview with the purpose to collect focused and specific data to clarify conceptual themes and achieve theoretical saturation. This should also not take more than 60 minutes of your time. A Dictaphone will be used to record the semi-structured interview which will then be transcribed for further analysis.

Your name will not appear on any documentation, and the information you provide will be treated as strictly confidential. You will not be required to provide the names of individuals or organisations, and should the nature of the project or client-consultant engagement request you not to disclose any specific details or information, you will not be required to do so either. Attached is the Consent form for further details on the ethical considerations pertaining to this study.

Please respond to this email should you be interested and I will contact you to share more information or answer any questions you might have.

Kind regards,  
Yolandi