



Jackson , Keith (2011) *Trust in the psychological contract: an international employee perspective*. PhD Thesis, SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies).

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Trust in the psychological contract: an international employee perspective

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of**

PhD

by

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2011

Abstract

This study is about researching trust; specifically, trust as a content element in common conceptualisations of the psychological contract. It contributes conceptual and empirical data and analysis to the currently under-researched relationship between trust and the psychological contract. The study presents and analyses data generated during a three-stage research process: a cross-sectional survey among a sample population of international employees ($n = 420$); semi-structured interviews followed by longitudinal *verstehend* conversations about trust in the psychological contract specifically and about trust in contexts for employment and individual career development generally.

By exploring cross-cultural dimensions of trust in the psychological contract this study confirms the complexity of trust as a research concept and as a social-psychological phenomenon. It develops a position that emphasises trust in interpersonal relationships as a process of perceived trustworthiness. Its findings challenge established conceptualisations locating trust primarily as a content element of the psychological contract: in this study trust emerges variously as input and output / outcome of negotiations and interpretations of the contract.

Although trust is confirmed as present in and across all psychological contracts, the international perspective generated by the primary data suggests that perceptions of trustworthiness can vary according to each individual's national cultural identity together with demographic variables such as age, gender and individual career trajectory.

Limitations of this study include: the relative smallness of the sample population; reliability issues generated by the conceptual anchoring of the study in primarily western interpretations of trust; generalisability issues as a consequence of the individual anchoring of the ethnographic data.

Of practical relevance are insights gleaned in respect of trust as a factor influencing employee decisions to quit or stay with a particular employer. These insights should support future research and practice in international human resource management, notably with regard to processes of targeted staff retention.

Dedication

*This study is dedicated to my loving parents who granted me an education,
and to my brother who led by example.*

Mum, I'm sorry you aren't here to see it finished.

Acknowledgements

*Many of the people who supported and contributed to this study are given specific
mention in the text.*

*My immediate thanks go to the many research respondents (the 'international
employees') whose participation made this study possible.*

*Particular thanks go to the staff of SOAS, University of London, who have supported
and guided me, notably my long-suffering panel members: Richard Mead, Norman
Flynn, and Helen Macnaughtan.*

*My thanks also to Dr. Wes Harry for reading and commenting on earlier drafts of
the text.*

*The following is a revised version of the original submission. I would like to thank
my examiners (Professor Guido Möllering and Dr. Huaichuan Rui) for their firm,
fair and expert guidance.*

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Part One: Exploration

According to Phillips and Pugh, 'exploratory research' is 'the type of research that is involved in tackling a new problem / issue / topic about which little is known, so the research idea cannot at the beginning be formulated very well' (2006:51). The syntax of the title chosen for this study highlights how the primary 'problem' for discussion here is 'trust' - something that all people appear to 'know' intimately. To illustrate, when a life insurance salesperson says to a potential client 'trust me' the client is likely to respond in a sceptical way. When asking an audience of strangers: 'Do you trust your partner / spouse?' the response is likely to be a smile. Explicit invocation of trust seldom (if ever) provokes a neutral response. Trust appears to be something universally familiar; yet, as a research concept it remains enigmatic. For this reason the metaphor chosen for Part One of this study is 'Exploration'.

Chapter One: Introduction

We are all afraid – for our confidence, for the future, for the world. That is the nature of the human imagination.

Jacob Bronowski (1976:279)

1.0 Introduction

This study is about researching trust; specifically, trust as a content element in common conceptualisations of the psychological contract. Building on seminal work by, for example, Robinson (1996) and Atkinson (2007) this study contributes conceptual and empirical data and analysis to the currently under-researched relationship between trust and the psychological contract.

The purpose of the discussion in this introductory chapter is to put into context the title phrase 'trust in the psychological contract: an international employee perspective'. The discussion proceeds in the spirit of a first encounter, taking a step-by-step approach towards examining how this phrase might be interpreted. It begins to develop perspectives on how trust in the psychological contract might be researched in contexts relevant to theory and practice in the combined fields of human resource management (henceforth HRM) and *international* human resource management (IHRM).

This study is interpretative and critical in approach. It seeks both qualitative and quantitative answers to questions such as why trust is vital to the work of HRM / IHRM researchers and practitioners. It explores whether a deep and diversified understanding of trust in the psychological contract might help these practitioners and researchers work more effectively with international employees: for example, in managing processes of targeted retention.

1.1 Research objective

Echoing Gilbert (1993), much social enquiry begins with questions such as: 'why do people behave as they do?' Questions giving initial momentum to this current study include:

- *What is trust?*
- *Why do people trust?*
- *Do people attribute different meanings to trust according to culture and / or other context-specific factors?*
- *How relevant is trust to employee interpretations (e.g. perceptions and experiences) of the psychological contract?*
- *To what extent might these interpretations vary across national contexts for employment: i.e. across contexts relevant to IHRM?*

The concept of 'trust' – along with 'truth', an etymological cousin – is one of the most complex in the English language (Ayto, 1990; Williams, 1985). To illustrate, during a comprehensive survey of specialist trust research McKnight and Chervany (1996) conclude that no one clear definition of 'trust' has emerged. They propose therefore that trust researchers begin their explorations from so-called 'common language' definitions of the word. Here is a British English example:

- *Reliance on and confidence in the truth, worth, reliability, etc, of a person or thing: faith (Collins, 2005:1727)*

This generic definition prompts three immediate observations:

- *That trust can refer to people and to things*
- *That trust appears to overlap closely with notions of 'confidence', 'reliance' and perceptions / assessments of 'worth'*
- *That at some point (':') in the process of definition, trust becomes explainable by an invocation of 'faith'*

A more scholarly definition by Rousseau et al (1998:395) posits 'trust' as:

- *A psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another.*

This definition emphasises a 'psychological state', and thus invites connection to explorations of trust in a 'psychological contract'. It makes processes of

'intention' and (positive) 'expectation' explicit, apparently suggesting that people might to some extent *choose* to trust and, by implication, be trusted: this further suggests that individuals can express what philosophers might term 'free will'. This scholarly definition of trust emerged during an attempt to 'identify the shared understandings of trust across (academic) disciplines' (Rousseau et al, 1998:393). The decision to posit centrally the cross-disciplinary insight that people can accept 'vulnerability' and on this basis recognise an opportunity – or perhaps, a perceived need – to trust other people is particularly interesting, not least because Denise Rousseau is a leading figure in the field of psychological contract research, as detailed in chapter three. For now it can be stated that research designed to elicit and explore 'trust' in the psychological contract is likely to encounter questions of individual 'vulnerability' and thus, from a research perspective, of ethics and responsibility – questions explored in more detail in chapter two. For this reference to what appears an inherent and universal sense of human 'vulnerability' reflects the Bronowski (1976) quote at the top of this chapter. If valid, it also represents an insight that should concern all researchers and practitioners interested in the 'H' element of HRM. It should also engage all those interested in people as employees.

In an attempt to develop 'an international employee perspective' it is instructive to look beyond both English language definitions and recognise how the multi-faceted nature of 'trust' becomes (potentially) more complex when cross-cultural dimensions of the concept are explored. For example, the noun form in English language terms appears as a singular concept or abstracted commodity, unlike (for example) in Arabic where equivalents of 'trust' commonly appear as a plural concept. Other language and culture-specific interpretations of 'trust' emerge from the surveys among international employees detailed subsequently in this study. Consequently, it is clear that attempting to answer even the first of the research questions listed above would be a major undertaking, and particularly when taking into account that centuries of multi-disciplinary research into 'trust' has thus far failed to provide a unifying definition. Thus, trust as a concept remains complex, paradoxical, elusive (cf. Nooteboom, 2006) – a state of affairs explored during the review of trust literature in chapter two.

From questions to research objective

Because this study seeks to combine conceptual with practical outcomes relevant to processes of IHRM practice and research an early decision was made to work in pursuit of a research objective; namely:

- ***To explore meanings attributed to trust when interpreting and negotiating the psychological contract in contexts relevant to IHRM.***

According to Saunders et al working towards a research objective 'is likely to lead to greater specificity than (working to) research questions' (2002:25). They further state how working towards an objective should support clarity of purpose and direction – a vital prospect when seeking to explore international and cross-cultural contexts for attributing meanings to trust.

1.2 Visualising trust in the psychological contract

The bulk of research into the psychological contract – henceforth, and unless otherwise specified, referred to as 'the contract' - has been conducted in the USA. Here, the aforementioned Denise Rousseau (1995:9) defines the contract as:

- *Individual beliefs, shaped by the organization, regarding terms of an exchange agreement between the individual and their organization*

A detailed discussion of Rousseau's contribution to psychological contract research appears in chapter three. For now it can be highlighted how she posits the two main parties in the employment relationship to be 'the individual' (employee) and 'the organization' as a collective term for the employer. In developing her internationally influential series of publications (cf. Rousseau, 1989, 1990, 1995, 2010) and collaborations such as PhD supervisions (cf. Robinson, 1996, Ho, 1998) Rousseau has become a leading proponent of emphasising individual employee interpretations of the contract – a line of enquiry developed in this current study.

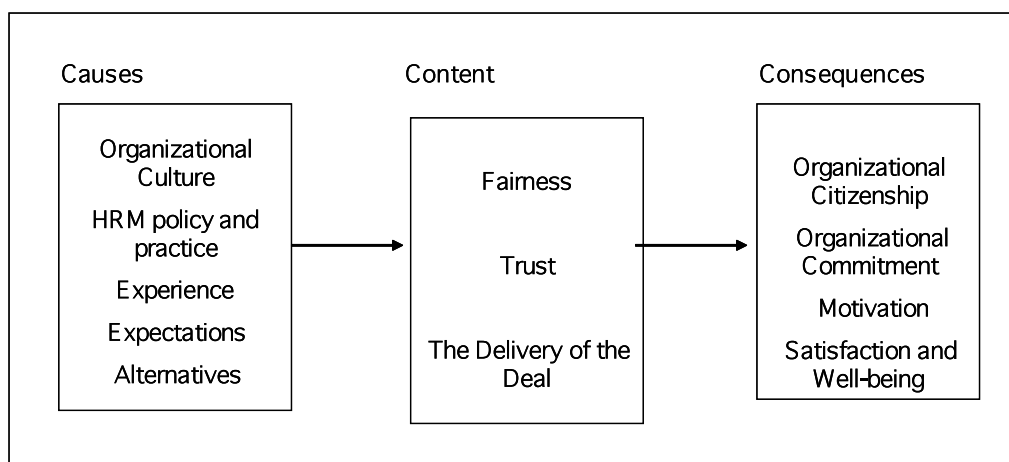
HRM

Invoking the perspective of employees *per force* highlights balancing consideration of the manager perspectives: in this case, perspectives associated with processes of HRM / IHRM. One scholar-practitioner definition describes HRM as 'a strategic and coherent approach to the management of an organization's most valued assets - the people working there who individually and collectively contribute to the achievement of its objectives' (Armstrong, 2006:3). As a domain of strategic management activity HRM involves managers and employees interdependently in processes of *resourcing* (i.e. connecting processes of employee recruitment, selection, induction and retention), *rewarding* (e.g. setting levels and forms of monetary and non-monetary compensation for work done or to be done), and *developing* in terms of offering or arranging opportunities for employee training, performance assessment, along with individual career development (Rowley & Jackson, 2010).

In this context the 'psychological contract' constitutes a scholarly HRM construct designed to describe, explain and predict how work-based relationships between employers and employees might develop and be managed (Conway & Briner, 2007; Dundon, 2010). To illustrate, employees who are recruited into an organisation will bring with them expectations that become subsequently shaped by what they experience in terms of performance management and perceive to be the relative 'fairness' of the rewards structures along with the competence of line-managers and other employees with an HRM responsibility to develop them in terms of enhancing their skills and future career opportunities. One common depiction of the contract appears as *Figure 1* below.

It should be noted that this Guest and Conway (2002) depiction is one of several commonly used by HRM researchers and practitioners. Other versions are discussed in chapter three, though the features captured here are fairly standard (cf. Conway & Briner, 2007). This version illustrates how 'trust' commonly appears as a core and perhaps axial element in cluster of concepts designated as the 'content' of the contract.

Figure 1: *The psychological contract*



Source: Guest and Conway (2002a – adapted)

One particular feature of such depictions is the salience awarded visibly or conceptually to ‘trust’ (cf. Robinson, 1996; Rousseau, 2001; Atkinson, 2007; Conway & Briner, 2007). Reading across the connecting arrows it appears that trust is central to how employers through the medium of agents such as HR managers, line managers and team leaders interact with employees towards interpreting and negotiating both the ‘causes’ and ‘consequences’ of how their work-based relationship is perceived, assumed and expected to evolve. The scholarly assumptions that appear to underpin the dynamic of this model are discussed in more critical detail below.

For now, referring to *Figure 1* helps illustrate how HRM can be understood as a purposive activity whose ‘coherence’ might be interpreted by linking between inputs such as ‘HRM policies and practices’ through employee perceptions of ‘trustworthiness’ and ‘fairness’ to expressions of ‘organisational commitment’. The model thus assumes that employees might commit to organisations / employers. For purposes of analysis it also assumes that organisations as socio-economic, technological and legal entities (cf. Mullins, 2005) might ‘trust’ employees – a line of assumption and analysis not adopted in this current study where (as explained below) the focus is on the relationships that develop between employees in organisations both within and beyond any one organisational hierarchy (cf. Handy, 1993).

However, before proceeding with these diverging lines of assumption it is as well to recognise that the psychological contract does not exist. Unlike a tangible (i.e. written and signed) 'contract of employment' the *psychological* contract is a model or semiotic construct designed by HRM scholars. A more practitioner approach would be to recognise it as a 'model' or a 'systematic description which maps or represents some state of affairs' (Jankowicz, 2000:181). The creation and application of such models appears to legitimise certain HRM theories and practices. As a shared point of reference they support professional learning and development, guiding individuals towards generalising on their own observations and experiences (Jackson, 2010a). Models such as the psychological contract represent a scholar-practitioner attempt to reduce - *systematically* - complex processes of HRM theory and practice to perceived simplicity (Conway and Briner, 2007). As such, it stands also as a valid theoretical framework or context within which to elicit and analyse how employees and their employers might experience their work-based relationships (Conway & Briner, 2007).

The Guest and Conway (2002) conceptualisation of the contract (*Figure 1*) is designed with an employer perspective in mind. This version has become standard in UK-based circles for HRM practice and research (cf. Guest, 1998; Guest et al, 1996; Guest & Conway, 1998, 2001, 2002a; Armstrong, 2006; CIPD, 2001 / 2010; Dundon, 2010). It is within this scholar-practitioner context that *Figure 1* has been adopted here. More will be said about various national and international perspectives on the contract in chapter three. For now it is relevant to note how *Figure 1* appears as a *leitmotif* throughout the design and development of this study.

Anchoring trust

The value of working to such research and (by inference) employer-driven constructs is that 'trust' becomes visibly anchored or formalised in a manner that transcends temporally and spatially bound individual experiences: i.e. the types of experiences boundaried by reference to actual and perceptual entities such as 'organisations' and to socio-economic notions such as 'job' or 'career'. To

illustrate, the outer box of *Figure 1* might be accepted as representing 'the organisation' or the limits of the employer's fiduciary responsibility towards an employee: the space within which the three-box depiction of the contract appears to float might thus be interpreted as representing the 'employment relationship': i.e. the space where, through time, and invoking Rousseau et al's (1998) definition of 'trust', the 'intentions' and 'expectations' of employees and managers will be routinely negotiated and exchanged.

Consequently, this study focuses on interpersonal manifestations and interpretations of trust (cf. McKnight & Chervany, 2006), taking into account both routine and critical interactions that appear to chart the course of the employment relationship. It explores contexts defined by an individual employee's sense of fiduciary attachment to employers: the term 'fiduciary' derives from Latin *fides* meaning 'trust' or 'faith'. The focus is on eliciting interactions that (retrospectively, perhaps) appear to chart the undulating course of an employment relationship (cf. Six, 2005). This study explores contexts defined by employment or by an individual employee's sense of fiduciary attachment to an organisation, an individual manager, a group of managers, or a team (cf. Curral & Inkpen, 2006). It assumes that, from an organisational perspective, managers and, for example, team leaders are also 'employees' with a fiduciary relationship to the employer and, assuming they occupy an elevated position within the organisational hierarchy, to their subordinates also (cf. Handy, 1993). Consequently, the international employees whose testimony informs the development of study include people from a range of work-based backgrounds and responsibilities: echoing Rousseau (1989, 2010), the focus in this study is on the individual.

1.3 Focus on interpersonal trust

The organisation gives context to what are commonly identified as the 'dyadic relationships' that develop between managers and subordinates and among employees generally (cf. Bijlsma & Van de Bunt, 2003; Six, 2005). The concept of 'interpersonal trust' connects between considerations of what 'trust' might mean

and why people might trust – a social propensity that is probably formed in each individual's experiences of family upbringing and formative education (cf. Rotter, 1967; Giddens, 2006); or, more fundamentally, as the expression of a basic survival instinct (cf. Erikson, 1959). It is a propensity, therefore, that employees worldwide can be assumed to share.

After a detailed survey of specialist trust literature Banerjee et al (2006:308) identify three 'necessary conditions' for all trusting or trust-based relationships. Paraphrasing from source, these are:

- *Interdependence*: at least one party in a trust relationship must be dependent on at least one other party in order to accomplish a goal
- *Vulnerability*: at least one party in the trust relationship is vulnerable to the opportunistic attitudes behaviour of another party in the relationship
- *Risk*: as a result of this vulnerability, the interests of at least one party (stakeholder) in the relationship are at risk

Given the central role commonly ascribed to 'trust' in the psychological contract the generic 'trusting relationship' identified by Banerjee et al (2006) can be assumed here to connect with conceptualisations of work-based or organisation-specific relationships, where interdependence is commonly expressed collectively in terms such as 'staff' or 'the workforce'. The 'vulnerability' condition again appears prominently while the 'risk' factor might help explain why people join organisations in the first place: i.e. beyond the promise of economic rewards there is the reassuring sense of sharing risk and of satisfying psychological and social (e.g. group identity) needs in response to an uncertain world (cf. Maslow, 1954; Tyler, 2001, 2003).

Above and beyond such fundamental considerations it is as well to ask in global terms why people generally - and employees particularly - should choose to enter so-called 'trusting relationships'. More specifically, it is useful to ask and reflect on questions such as:

- *Why should an employee choose to make him/herself dependent on any one employer?*

- *Why should an employee choose to appear vulnerable and thereby expose him/herself to the opportunistic and potentially harmful behaviour of any one employer?*
- *Why should an employee risk trusting and - in return – risk being trusted by any one employer?*

To begin exploring such complex questions there needs to be some clear starting position: explored from what base, and emphasising whose perspective? Reference to *Figure 1* gives such a starting point and the outline of a map, along with blank spaces that might be explored and charted in more detail: the 'employment relationship'.

Trust in the employment relationship

The process of social interaction or exchange through time forms what is understood here as 'the employment relationship' or 'the interconnections that exist between employers and employees in the workplace' (Armstrong, 2006:215). In *Figure 1* the space and time within and through which this relationship might develop can be visualised as the space in which the three-box structure of the contract appears to float. In emphasising the employer perspective with this model Guest and Conway (2002) are suggesting that this structure represents what employers might prefer to regard as the normal or even normative structure of employment relationships (cf. Atkinson, 2007). And one sobering insight from Drucker (1990) relevant here is that people engaged in developing a trust-based employment relationship do not need to like each other: trust can be experienced instrumentally as a means to an end or (here) 'consequence' that might be measured as some form of performance outcome such as 'employee commitment' to an employing organisation, its managers and their espoused or inferred values and observed practices.

As in all social relationships the inter-dependency that employee and employer create and sustain together is shaped by the attitudes and behaviours that each party brings to the relationship and, by implication, to the expectations they each

bring to interpretations and negotiations of the contract: 'expectations' highlighted in *Figure 1* as a potential 'cause'; 'positive expectations' as a key element in individual decisions to trust (Rousseau et al, 1998). In effect, as expectations change and evolve through reflection on 'consequences' such as 'satisfaction and well-being' so the negotiation of the contract is renewed. Consequently, despite the lineally arranged arrows in *Figure 1* the model has a cyclical and iterative dynamic that a two-dimensional representation struggles to depict. In other words, this employment relationship might be understood in terms of the extent to which each party appears to trust the other, and of how they choose – or *manage* - to express this trust in each other (cf. Fox, 1974). For a complex variety of reasons employee trusting attitudes and behaviours are subject to change: not least, the expectations that new hires bring into the organisation are likely to diverge significantly from those of the more experienced or established employees (Rousseau, 1990). However, other variables are likely to play a role here such as age, gender, and individual career trajectory; or, indeed, 'nationality' as relevant towards defining 'an international employee perspective' on trust.

As a consequence of this diversity and fluctuation of employee expectation and experience the perceived role and salience of trust in such relationships is subject to change (cf. Herriot et al, 1997). To illustrate, the Employee Outlook survey published by the London-based *Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development* (CIPD) routinely polls over two thousand UK-based employees about their attitudes to work and employment. A January 2010 survey discovered that job satisfaction had declined and, significantly, only a third of all respondents 'trusted' the senior managers in their organisation. Furthermore, a trend had emerged indicating that this lack of trust was beginning to impact negatively on employee relationships to their line-managers also (CIPD, 2010). These and similar findings prompt fundamental questions:

- *What binds employees to their current employers?*
- *What prompts these employees to quit their current employers?*

Addressing such questions guides HRM practitioners to consider the axial

function of trust and, by extension, the nature of the trust-based relationship is thus interpreted as part partnership (the interdependency suggested by Banerjee et al, 2006) and part exchange with the employer holding the upper hand as far as access to power and other resources is concerned (cf. Blau, 1964) – a reason why employees might seek collective solutions to individual insecurities (cf. Dietz, 2004). If managers and employees can strive towards ‘behavioural consistency’ or the type of routine and predictable exchange that renders business planning easier and reduces the risk of disappointment inherent in all human social relationships, they might form a type of ‘partnership’ and, regardless of whether this term is invoked explicitly or not, a dyadic relationship that relies on mutually reciprocated perceptions of competence and integrity in order to survive and prosper (Dietz, 2004). However, this will depend on the extent to which pre-agreed conditions (e.g. mutual expectations) are being met and / or are perceived to have been communicated and understood – an insight that has particular resonance in contexts for HRM practitioners and researchers challenged to communicate integrity and competence ‘across cultures’ (cf. Schneider & Barsoux, 2003; Tan et al, 2007; Steers et al, 2010; Wasti et al, 2010).

The CIPD (2010) data also suggest that researchers who attempt to elicit a ‘snapshot’ picture of the ‘state of mind’ that is employee trust might be missing the ‘bigger picture’ that is ‘trust in the psychological contract’. Consequently, in seeking to elicit the meanings that individual employees might attribute to trust this current study also implicitly seeks to ascertain under what conditions in relation to trust an employee might choose to seek to terminate an existing employment relationship: i.e. to what extent might trust – or its perceived loss – be a factor in employee decisions to quit an organisation?

In respect of trust specifically McKnight and Chervany (2006) suggest that ‘all relationships begin somewhere’. It is equally valid to claim that all relationships must end at some point: all employees inevitably terminate the employment relationship for one reason or another (Jackson & Harry, 2010).

1.4 Introducing the international employee perspective

For the purposes of this introductory discussion an ‘international employee’ might be identified as an individual who routinely interacts with people in and across a variety of national and regional cultural contexts and who appears to define career development by reference to trends in international business and shifts in global markets for employment (cf. Sparrow et al, 2004). If such an employee holds a manager position – as most participants in this current study do – this profile might be extended to incorporate ‘someone who works with or through people across national boundaries to accomplish global corporate objectives’ (Steers et al, 2010:28).

One established method to identify or ‘label’ participants in international or cross-cultural trust and psychological contract research is to allocate them to distinct nationality group (e.g. ‘the British’) and, fixing this allocation as an independent research variable, proceed to elicit and analyse data from them. The common research assumption appears to be that from birth each individual becomes socialised into a particular ‘national culture’ and thereby ‘learns’ distinctive sets of beliefs, values and norms of behaviour – a formative and irrevocable experience that shapes their attitudes and behaviours in adult life (cf. Hofstede, 1980, 1983). This current study accepts the face validity of this culturalist perspective (cf. Chen, 2004) and tests its reliability in a series of preliminary studies detailed in chapter five. However, and ‘beyond culture’ (cf. Mead & Andrews, 2009), this study also seeks to anchor the primary research effort ethnographically in order to elicit the perspectives of individual employees taking into consideration variables beyond the colour of their passport(s). The objective is to elicit attitudes and expectations that might distinguish ‘international’ from ‘non-international’ employees: a distinction that may or may not conform to differences in employee nationality (cf. Jandt, 2010). The rationale underpinning this research effort is that understanding what might emerge as a distinct ‘international employee perspective’ would be of specific interest to IHRM researchers and practitioners and furthermore serve to make a more relevant contribution to the current state of trust and psychological contract research.

IHRM

To give introductory context it is necessary here to compare how scholars distinguish between the concerns of *international* HRM as opposed to non-international / 'domestic' HRM researchers and practitioners. To illustrate, Briscoe et al (2009:26-7) build on Briscoe and Schuler (2004) to highlight the added complexity of contexts for IHRM, where practitioners and, by extension, researchers are challenged to:

- *Become more involved in diverse interpretations of employment law and of business ethics*
- *Become more involved in the personal lives of employees: e.g. family, tax, visas, and other issues arising from working across national jurisdictions*
- *Develop a heightened tolerance of unfamiliarity of input and uncertainty of outcome in respect of decision-making*
- *Appreciate the cross-cultural dimensions of management communications generally and the development and expression of a so-called 'global mindset' specifically*

In conceptual terms the additional complexity pervading the environment for IHRM practice and research demands more diversified understandings of trust and, by extension, of 'trust in the psychological contract'. It demands a keener understanding of *diversity* as defined by reference to gender, age along with ethnicity / nationality and other social-psychological constructs and experiences (cf. Schneider & Barsoux, 2003; Jandt, 2010). Indeed, a keener conceptual understanding of diversity connects with the interests and concerns of 'domestic' HRM practitioners and researchers also, given the increasing frequency worldwide of cross-border mergers and acquisitions (cf. Wei & Rowley, 2010).

Why 'an international employee perspective' on trust?

The conceptual and practical implications of drawing such distinctions are discussed in chapter four. For now it can be stated how - along with reflecting on professional experience - recognising the increasing scholar-practitioner

emphasis given to *international* HRM prompted the attempt to develop a so-called 'international employee perspective' on trust in the psychological contract. This too can be interpreted as a response to the increasing globalisation of business and management thinking and practices in the world and, by extension, to the internationalisation of business and management research. It can also be understood as a response to the ubiquity of what in chapter two are termed 'zero definitions' of trust used to sell 'how to' management development products worldwide. To illustrate, the cover of one 'best selling' self-development book for managers proclaims 'trust' as 'the one thing that changes everything' (Covey & Merrill, 2006). Without offering any specific definition the authors emphasise trust as a 'feeling of confidence' and on this basis identify 'the opposite of trust' as 'suspicion' (2006:5). Along similarly simplistic lines Blackmann (1997) equates trust in contexts for Sino-foreign business negotiations with 'suspicion towards foreigners'. International business and management texts that highlight the importance 'trust' commonly do so without defining the concept.

An initial scan of more scholarly discussions of trust appears to suggest reassuringly a general cross-disciplinary consensus that 'trust' does indeed 'matter' (cf. Zaheer et al, 1998), not least because systematic attention to trust in its varied manifestations and interpretations might, for example, support attempts to both understand and explain how managers and their organisations appear to perceive and manage risk and, by extension, under- and / or outperform competitors (cf. McEvily & Zaheer, 2006). As business becomes more global, so perceptions of complexity, risk and opportunity become more fluid, less certain, more risky (cf. Beckert, 2006). Against the background of what management scholars, politicians and business people commonly refer to as 'globalisation' there is both a shared perception and an increasingly common experience of a growing diversity in 'the number and variety of exchange relations' along with an 'increased complexity and uncertainty of the business environment (that) cannot be handled without the presence of interpersonal and / or interorganizational trust' (Lane, 1998:1).

Employees in an 'invisible continent'

Of particular relevance here is the impact that the commonly invoked though often loosely defined process of 'globalisation' has on the perspectives attributed to *international* employees and, through these, the salience and meanings attributed to trust. To illustrate, Ohmae (2001) challenges the relevance of maintaining subscription to the concept of 'national' boundaries. Rather he invokes a global 'invisible continent' comprising four overlapping dimensions of people's experience and, increasingly, of people's expectation. This view suggests that, from an IHRM perspective, seeking to identify 'an international employee perspective' might entail looking beyond 'nationality'.

The first dimension Ohmae (2001) is 'visible': it is physical and continues to be subject to 'laws of gravity' and thus remains currently indispensable. It is the land upon which organisations stand and the basis from which employees and employers physically interact. Historically it supports the basis upon which financial managers calculate mathematical projections such as *net present value* (NPV). These financial projections rely on observations of past experience and hence represent a 'strictly old world' dimension for global business activity (Ohmae, 2001:4). For another dimension is 'borderless' in that it serves to transport human perception beyond the 'cartographic illusion' that 'national borders represent lines of true political autonomy' (2001:5). More specifically:

- *The economy of this dimension is not tied to nation-states at all. It is driven by consumers and financial investors who care not at all for national stability, who avoid taxes wherever possible, and who take the availability of jobs for granted, because they know they can work for anyone, anywhere, in the world*

This 'borderless' dimension helps explain the 'international' as opposed to 'non-international' or domestic employee perspective (cf. Sparrow et al, 2004) - a perspective that might appear more immediate to researchers and practitioners in Europe as opposed to North American HRM in response to cross-border social, economic, legal and political developments in formation of the European Union and the increased attention given to social, cultural, legal and economic

diversity that such developments entail (cf. Brewster & Bournois, 1991; Brewster & Hegewisch, 1993; Sparrow & Hiltrop, 1994; Torrington et al, 2009). This insight connects in more global HRM terms with Ohmae's 'Cyber Dimension' as exemplified by the forms of internet-based communications that have become routine for employers and employees alike and yet 'have changed the consumer, producer, and civic environments - the environments of commerce and civilization - in profound and irrevocable ways' (Ohmae, 2001:6). In response, one of the most dynamic fields (an 'old school' term!) for trust research has become 'e-commerce' (cf. Xiao & Benbasat, 2003, 2007) and, more recently, processes of 'electronic' or 'e-HRM' (cf. Harris et al, 2003). Here trust-based interaction between people who are and remain strangers to each other is becoming increasingly regarded as a norm (cf. Knights, 2001; McKnight & Chervany, 2001, 2006).

From a broader sociological perspective 'globalisation' generates perceptions and experiences of reduced space and time for both individual and institutional decision-making and for any purposive interactions between the two (Giddens, 1994). Trust becomes linked to transparency and openness in processes of strategic management (Ghoshal & Bartlett, 1997). Trust attracts relevance as a means for social actors to interpret and negotiate heightened perceptions of complexity and uncertainty in international markets for employment (Beckert, 2006). As organisations compete to attract international employees designated as 'talent' (cf. Michaels et al, 2001) trust and perceived trustworthiness become marketable as organisational 'assets' (Ouchi, 1981) or attributable as 'virtues' (Greenwood & De Cieri, 2007), each supporting NPV and other calculations and projections of competitive business advantage. Newly coined terms of reference are emerging such as what new 'value proposition' international employers might offer international employees in order to attract and retain them (Harris et al, 2003) - a line of conceptualisation that might supersede the markedly 'old school' psychological contract with its roots in studies of industrial psychology in the 1960s (cf. Argyris, 1960). Nonetheless, the psychological contract endures and is beginning to attract research attention beyond Europe and North America in emerging markets for IHRM practice and research such as China (Si et al,

2009), India (Bhatnagar, 2009), Turkey (Aycan, 2004) and Brazil (Elvira & Davila, 2005).

The fourth dimension of the Ohmae (2001) 'invisible continent' is the one giving context to 'high multiples' or the insight that long-established organisations are now becoming increasingly multi-national or global and thereby becoming increasingly removed from their original geographic, demographic and economic roots: one example is *Nokia*. There are global organisations that are creations of managers and entrepreneurs embracing the 'cyber dimension': *CNN, Amazon, eBay, Google* – organisations that routinely score highly on global rankings of 'most attractive employers' (cf. Harris et al, 2003). The high multiples that Ohmae refers to are specific to market capitalisation: ideas attract investment, frequently carrying with them higher risk, as evidenced in the so-called 'dot.com' bubble of the 1990s. However, such 'high multiple' risk taking applies also to real estate, as in the 'property asset 'booms' that continue to visit urban developments across the world. As Ohmae (2001:7) states: 'the most significant aspect of this dimensions the application of unprecedented leverage. Multiples... are a creation of mathematics based on a set of imaginative assumptions'. The waves of economic and political crisis that have swept across the world since Ohmae posited his projections suggest that a deeper and more diversified understanding of trust is becoming even more necessary. For, as Kramer (2009:69) states: 'despite deceit, greed, and incompetence on a previously unimaginable scale, people are still trusting too much', before advocating a more 'tempered' approach to trust. The expert view appears to be that, in order to trust wisely or well, people first need to know more about how and why people trust as they do – an express concern of this current study.

1.5 Building on existing research

There remains a distinct lack of empirical research focussed explicitly on the concept of trust in the psychological contract. Notable exceptions include Robinson (1996) and Atkinson (2007) – two articles that considerably influenced the design of this current study. However, both articles are markedly

'national' or mono-cultural in the attention they give to exploring what 'trust in the psychological contract' might mean. Sandra Robinson targeted MBA graduates in the USA, while Carol Atkinson elicits the experiences and expectations of UK-based employees. Despite increasing research interest in exploring meanings attributed to trust internationally in organisations (cf. Dietz & Den Hartog, 2006), and despite the internationally-oriented research output of institutions such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in Geneva, there remains a dearth of research exploring diverse and / or international perspectives on trust as a core 'content' element of the contract (cf. Conway & Briner, 2007). One reason might be because the concept of the 'international employee' is relatively new to IHRM research: attention has tended to concentrate on the experiences of 'expatriate' and / or 'international' *managers* (cf. Sparrow et al, 2004; Briscoe & Schuler, 2004; Mead & Andrews, 2009). This is unsurprising, given that multinational corporations (MNCs) are likely to be among the primary sponsors and 'consumers' of IHRM research (cf. Harris et al, 2003; Briscoe et al 2009).

Researching trust in the psychological contract

Any new entrant to the field of exploring meanings attributed explicitly to 'trust' in psychological contract research is advised to learn from the achievements of the aforementioned Robinson and Atkinson papers (Tony Dundon, 2010 - *personal communication*). They each build on prior empirical studies including Herriot et al (1997) in the UK and Shore and Tetrick (1991) in the USA. To illustrate, Herriot et al explore 'employee' as opposed to 'manager' understandings of 'obligations' and 'expectations' (Herriot et al, 1997); Shore and Tetrick (1991) explore the 'relative validity' of expressly scholarly constructs such as 'perceived organizational support' (POS). In both studies 'trust' as a content element of the contract becomes only obliquely salient in response to the data generated by members of the sample population. To illustrate, Herriot et al asked 184 'employees' (representing the general workforce perspective) and 184 'managers' (representing the organisational perspective) to recall 'critical incidents' in their relationship to each other. The

researchers found that members of the employee group tended to interpret contract obligations differently from the manager group, this because employees 'attributed' a 'lack of trust of the organization' and expressed 'job insecurity': to contextualise, the management team had recently introduced workforce redundancies (Herriot et al, 1997:160). In retrospect it appears that these employees were experiencing the 'vulnerability' and 'risk' elements of the relationship, while the 'interdependency' element is where the relationship was breaking down (cf. Banerjee et al, 2006): the expectations of employees were distinctly *negative* in comparison to those of the managers (cf. Rousseau et al, 1998).

By contrast Robinson (1996) along with Atkinson (2007) begin their respective research focusing explicitly on 'trust'. Robinson's stated purpose is to examine 'theoretical and empirical relationships between employees' trust in their employers and their experiences of psychological contract breach' (1996:574). Developing similarly on the ground-breaking research developed in the United States by Denise Rousseau (1989, 1990, 1995) and subsequently in the UK by David Guest and colleagues (cf. Guest et al, 1996; Guest, 1998; Guest & Conway, 1997, 1998, 2002) Atkinson's study is designed to 'contribute empirical data to the under-researched relationship between trust and the psychological contract' (Atkinson, 2007:277) – an endeavour emulated in this current study.

Indeed, both researchers appear heavily influenced by the work of Denise Rousseau: Rousseau acted as Robinson's PhD supervisor. Atkinson connects more overtly with European streams of trust research: e.g. she draws on Lane (1998) to emphasise trust as a social phenomenon. As in this current study trust is considered 'at the interpersonal level' (Atkinson, 2007:230). Drawing on Fox (1974) she further posits the claim trust is present in all psychological contracts just as trust is present in all social relationships: a telling conceptual emphasis given that 'psychological contracts' do not actually exist. Her enquiry relates to illuminating what type of trust influences the type of contract or work-based relationship that employees and employers strike up together – these various types are discussed in chapters two and three.

Atkinson (2007) draws on Rousseau (1995) to emphasise trust as a core element in understanding both 'the written and unwritten agreements' that give employment relationships their apparent and (perhaps) predictable shape. Unlike Rousseau, Atkinson (2007) challenges the view that 'trust' is relevant primarily in the interpretation of relational types of contract (cf. Rousseau, 1995; Shore & Tetrick, 1994): i.e. one that tends to involve both parties into a longer-term commitment (cf. *Table 1*, chapter three). Similar to Robinson (1996) Atkinson invokes Butler (1991) in order to express her interest in identifying the 'causes' of trust and its perceived breach. Neither researcher appears to inform their respondents that they are engaged in research on trust – an approach considered in this current study to verge on the unethical (cf. Jackson & Schwegler, 2005).

Conceptualisation

One major difference in research conceptualisation between Atkinson (2007) and this current study is apparent in the titles. Atkinson combines 'trust' and established HRM conceptualisations of the 'psychological contract' (cf. Guest, 1998). This study first locates trust *in* the psychological contract in order to explore the extent to which this essentially western conceptualisation of trust as a core 'content' element of the contract is tenable across contexts for IHRM as opposed to the domestic HRM contexts researched by both Atkinson (2007) and Robinson (1996). Diverging from these two seminal reference points this current study seeks to explore the conceptual depths of meanings attributed to trust in the psychological contract using the 'critical discourse' approach outlined below.

Sampling

Both Robinson (1996) and Atkinson (2007) have been highly influential in guiding the sampling strategy pursued here. It is instructive to recognise how Robinson (1996) worked with a convenience sample of 125 'newly hired managers' as they progressed from being her business school students to employees in a variety of US-based organisations. Using their pre-existing

relationship as a platform she designed a three-phase (Time 1, Time 2 and Time 3) longitudinal study - a design also used by Rousseau (1990, 1995): it influences the 'three anchoring' design of this current study, as explained below. Each 'T' phase represents a researcher intervention in the experience of the employees / new hires with a cross-sectional survey designed to elicit the extent to which these employees perceive that the 'promises' they were given - or had inferred from previous information - they perceive to have been breached. The quantitative generated by these three cross-sectional survey interventions allows Robinson to trace patterns outlining the extent to which individual employee expectations might have been fulfilled or disappointed. A similar approach can be used to identify types of organisational cultures and styles of management behaviour that appear to generate varying levels of employee trust and, by extension, varying levels of 'organisational trust' and effectiveness (cf. Curral & Inkpen, 2006). By attempting to link management and organisational performance to trust Robinson (1996) connects with a well-established stream of trust research in the United States (cf. Zand, 1972, Zaheer et al, 1998) and subsequently interpreted more internationally (cf. Bijlsma & Van de Bunt, 2003; Tzafrir, 2005; Saunders et al, 2010). In seeking to elicit whether trust might play any role in international employee decisions to quit or stay with their current employers this current study seeks to make a contribution to this research.

Normal behaviour?

It is interesting to note here how Robinson (1996) - probably influenced by Robinson and Rousseau (1994) - assumes that employee perceptions of breach are 'the norm' rather than 'the exception', suggesting that in contexts for employment the relationship between employer and employee proceeds as a process not of *whether* content elements such as 'trust', 'the deal' and 'fairness' in the psychological contract might be disappointed but rather of *when*. It should be unsurprising therefore to learn that up to eighty per cent of all international research into the psychological contract focuses on issues of perceived breach (Conway & Briner, 2007). Heralding a major contribution to trust and psychological contract research Robinson states that her study 'empirically

demonstrates, for the first time, why psychological contract breach has the effects that it does on employee behavior', simultaneously identifying one of the 'crucial mediating variables in perceptions of breach' (Robinson, 1996:593): namely, trust and / or its perceived loss.

Atkinson (2007) applies a case study approach comprising forty-one dyadic interviews across three small-sized UK-based case study organisations, each unnamed and described as operating in three distinct business sectors: manufacturing, insurance, and technology. Each interview lasted between thirty and sixty minutes, the content being transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Echoing Guest and Conway (2002), Atkinson arranged for one interview in each organisation to be with an owner-manager 'in order to investigate the employer's perspective' (2007:232), thus contriving a 'management/workforce' balance of perspectives targeted by Herriot et al (1997). Other interviewees were volunteers from among the cohort of employees in each organisation. She analyses her interview data using a critical incident technique, whereby – again echoing Herriot et al - 'respondents cite incidents that they believe are relevant to the issues under discussion, in this case, fulfilment of breach of obligations within the psychological contract' (Atkinson, 2007:232). It should be noted here that Atkinson chooses to emphasise perceived fulfilment of 'obligations' as the aforementioned 'issues under discussion': researchers influenced by Rousseau (cf. 2001) tend to emphasise 'promises' (cf. Ho, 2005). So, although Atkinson (2007) appears open minded towards the elicited content of respondent testimony, she has determined *a priori* the data to be deemed relevant.

In conclusion Atkinson (2007) claims to affirm the 'socially constructed nature of the psychological contract', highlighting the concept of 'mutuality' in respect of 'perceptions of obligations' and consequently in possible perceptions of breach (2007:242). Unlike Robinson (1996) she does not appear to assume that perceptions of breach are the norm: she allows space for her respondents to connect with a wider range of issues previously identified through her review of psychological contract research. This is the approach adopted in this current study when using *Figure 1* to give structure to the survey interviews detailed in chapter seven. Both Robinson (1996) and Atkinson (2007) foreground the

importance of eliciting respondent *perceptions*: however, neither researcher explains how these complex human processes might operate, or influence their analysis of respondent data. In chapter two there is an attempt to address this commonly underestimated research problem.

Developing an international employee perspective

For this question of perception becomes relevant when attempting to consider diverse perspectives on trust: for example, it raises the question as to how far age, gender, nationality / culture-specific identity might influence how individual respondents perceive the salience of trust in established conceptualisations of the psychological contract. Atkinson (2007) does consider a range of variables: e.g. how interpretations of trust – and, in combination, of perceived mutual obligations – might vary across contexts defined by business sector and / or the patterns of critical incidents that respondents choose to recall before positing trust (or equivalent concepts) as ‘relevant’. Both Robinson (1996) and Atkinson (2007) are essentially mono-cultural in their employee focus, at least when compared to the how ‘diversity’ might be defined more broadly in contexts for HRM / IHRM (cf. Rowley & Jackson 2010). Furthermore, Atkinson locates her empirical research firmly in the organisational context: her respondents appear never fully released from their ‘employee of organisation X’ status. In contrast, this current study anchors the international employee perspective firmly in the individual’s experience, accepting *a priori* that the relevance of trust to one or more respondents might extend beyond their current employment relationship. In this study the interviews and conversations take place physically and (as far as the respondent chooses) also perceptually at a distance from any specified organisational or employer context, thus allowing the ‘time-space’ to be a research respondent as much the choice of the researchee as the researcher.

The relatively narrow interpretation of national, organisational and employment cultures evident in both studies appears to mirror each researcher’s sense of national cultural identity: i.e. a British researcher working in UK business school and researching UK-based organisations (Atkinson); a US American researcher

working in a US American business school and researching US American organisations (Robinson). The major difference between the two in terms of sampling is that Robinson focuses on MBA students and graduates while Atkinson targets people in full-time employment: in this current study part-time MBA students appear prominently in the preliminary studies while full-time employees dominate the cohort of volunteers participating in the interviews and conversations.

Both Robinson and Atkinson cite only from English language publications: their engagement with their respective sample populations proceeds exclusively in English. In contrast, this current study chooses to work explicitly and systematically with a more diverse sample population of respondents – the ‘international employees’ profiled above. Furthermore, this study represents an attempt systematically to reduce the *a priori* influence of western researcher bias (e.g. in terms of language or discourse preference), thereby opening up the combined conceptualisation of ‘trust’ *in* – as opposed to *and* - the ‘psychological contract’ to more open minded critical scrutiny (cf. Phillips & Pugh, 2006).

1.6 Developing a critical approach

The discussion in this chapter began by stating how this study is about researching trust; specifically, trust as a content element in common conceptualisations of the psychological contract (*Figure 1*). Drawing on Atkinson (2007), Lane (1998) and Fox (1974) ‘trust’ has been accepted as a social phenomenon that exists in all human relationships. These include employer-employee relationships, the pattern and structure of which might be described by reference to a ‘psychological contract’ (cf. Guest & Conway, 2002; Armstrong, 2006). The role of trust in the psychological contract is both vital and potentially fragile: e.g. when employees individually and / or collectively perceive or experience a breach of their trust by their employer they similarly perceive a ‘breach’ of the contract (Robinson, 1996).

How to proceed on this premise? Firstly, interpreting ‘trust’ as a social

phenomenon suggests it can be researched empirically. The original Greek concept of 'phenomenon' meant 'to make something visible' (Ayto, 1990). As a social phenomenon trust becomes evident as an experience or expression in processes of human interaction and relationship building during which overt human expressions or 'acts' of trust might be observed (Yamagishi, 2005). Consequently, researchers might elicit individual expressions of trust and compare these across individuals. Potentially, these elicited expressions of trust might be measured and collated, allowing researchers to attribute differing 'levels of trust' among specified groups of people in specified situations. Different research approaches towards this objective are explored in chapter two.

The research objective chosen for this current study is to explore meanings attributed to trust when interpreting and negotiating the psychological contract in contexts relevant to IHRM. The focus here is on meanings attributed by members of a sample population profiled briefly above as 'international employees' (cf. Sparrow et al, 2004). Highlighting the 'international' identity of employees offers the potential for developing multi- or cross-cultural perspectives on trust (cf. Tan et al, 2007; Mead & Andrews, 2009; Jandt, 2010). It also facilitates the adoption of a critical approach to research.

Language

Firstly, like a language or dialect the psychological contract illustrated in *Figure 1* represents a culture-specific construct or artefact (cf. Sapir, 1949). Even the striking three-box design sits deep in the collective psychology and perception patterns of western cultures in that it represents the type of 'triadic formation' or trope embedded in folk and fairy tales (good fairies grant 'three wishes', Goldilocks meets 'three bears'), in religion (*la Trinità*, the trident of Poseidon / Neptune / Shiva) and in popular myth, as when a spider inspires Robert Bruce to 'try, try and try again' (cf. Opie & Opie, 1969, 1974; Franz, 1997). The prime number '3' anchors the universally significant π , while a three-step design is fundamental to the traditions and processes of social research as in the 'rule of three' approach posited by Auguste Comte. This approach to social research is

evident in *Figure 1*: the 'frappe' or opportune 'knock' of human curiosity that sets perceptions, experiences and expectations in motion (*cause*); the ontological experience of creating reality (*content*); the formulation of sociological 'laws' (*lois*) designed to explain (retrospectively) people's intentions or the cause(s) of what today and (perhaps) in future are observable as *consequences* (Comte, 1974). Consequently, the contract as depicted in *Figure 1* appears to exploit a particular 'way of seeing' that is embedded in western culture (Berger, 1972/2008), where people routinely read and write - and thereby accrue and attribute incremental meaning - from left to right and where drawn timelines tend to suggest progress from past (left-hand side) to future (right-hand side). In ancient Greek friezes, this progression signified moving from defeat to victory (Boardman et al, 1986). However, Arabic, classical Chinese and Japanese are examples of languages supported by huge populations that read and write with a non-western orientation.

Culture

Linking language use to culture it is instructive to echo C P Snow (1960) and talk about an 'academic culture' as identifying a style of thinking and communication that distinguishes this culture from the everyday working experience of so-called 'lay' people such as employees and HRM practitioners. For example, members of each culture are likely to have differing interpretations of what terms such as 'organisational commitment' or 'citizenship' might mean. To illustrate, Guest and Conway (2002) sought to elicit responses to these terms among UK-based employers as to what organisational performance benefits they recognised. If they had surveyed their academic colleagues they might have encountered differing interpretations. The mood guiding their colleagues' responses might be biased by a general antipathy towards aspects of 'managerialism' (a culture-specific value judgement) commonly perceived and experienced by employees in UK universities today (Hoyle & Wallace, 2005). Academics as professionals traditionally identify less with specific employers (e.g. universities) and more with colleagues within the distinct cultures and hierarchical structures of their particular academic discipline (cf. Becher, 1989, Becher & Trowler, 2001). These

disciplines are both traditional (e.g. science, medicine, law) and (now) increasingly global. Prominent academics work within these disciplines also work across employers at international conferences and so on, thereby recognising that they might 'take the availability of jobs for granted, because they know they can work for anyone, anywhere, in the world' (Ohmae, 2001:5). In the early modern period Latin-speaking scholars used to take visiting positions at universities across what is now Europe and North Africa: they were 'international employees'. Today IHRM researchers recognise similar career opportunities and simultaneously – using international English as a scholarly *lingua franca* - opportunities to explore empirically the universal relevance of hypothetical phrases such as 'trust in the psychological contract'.

Identity

The languages that people use to express meaning are indicative of how they perceive and choose to express their sense of individual identity (cf. Hall, 1976; Lewis, 1996; Jandt, 2010). This holds true for whatever an individual might designate as their 'first language' and / or their engagement with varieties of English for international business or research. Interpreted broadly, language can be observed as both a cause of conflict or relationship failure, and of its resolution (cf. Avruch, 2002). Developing on this insight the model depicted in *Figure 1* represents a particular pattern of discourse, defined as a formalized way of thinking that becomes manifest through a stylised choice of language – 'medical jargon' is one example. Discourse can be defined as a formalized way of thinking that becomes manifest through a stylised choice of language. The three boxes in *Figure 1* are designed to cluster a series of undefined concepts, apparently into some form of hierarchy. The arrows (left-to-right) between boxes suggest causal relationships (Gilbert, 1993:25). In scholarly HRM jargon this pattern might be formulated as:

- *HRM policies and practices that are perceived by an employee to be fair will influence that employee's sense of organizational citizenship*

As Markowsky (2005) suggests, in every theory there is an argument. And one social-cultural effect of using this style of discourse is to distinguish between group insiders and outsiders (Jandt, 2010). How people communicate to other 'in-group' members helps distinguish one 'tribe' and their 'territory' from others: Becher (1989) conducted an anthropological survey of different academic disciplines using this approach. The 'in-group' use of discourse becomes a signifier of professional identity. Paraphrasing from Hofstede (1980), the members of each group and sub-group express their own learned and (perhaps) predictable 'programmed' expressions of identity (cf. Jandt, 2010).

Another observed effect of scholarly discourse might be to inspire confidence or awe in the way outsiders perceive insiders as expert or professional, thereby supporting scholarly conceptualisations of 'professional trust' (cf. Bunderson, 2001; Frowe, 2005). Applying the terminology of discourse analysis, Rousseau (2001) describes the each 'building block' apparent in the construction and overall conceptualisation of the psychological contract as a 'schema'. In discourse analysis, 'schemata' (plural form) can be defined as 'cognitive constructs which allow for the organization of information in long-term memory and which provide a basis for prediction' (Widdowson, 1983:34). As depicted in *Figure 1* 'trust' is one prominent schema, indeed a core element of the contract and the employment relationship that lends it context and (potential) meaning.

Influence

A first encounter with *Figure 1* immediately influences how HRM practitioners and researchers think about 'trust': their perspective becomes inevitably biased. This insight prompted the use of the model in the semi-structured interviews (chapter seven). How resistant would international (e.g. Asian) respondents be to this essentially western pattern of discourse? For as Foucault (1970) and Western (2008) maintain, a discourse operates as a tool or expression of power, authority and influence, serving to distinguish between those aspiring to lead and those whose lot (willingly or not) is to follow. This 'lot' might be defined less fatalistically as the expression of a personality trait and / or propensity towards

'gullibility' (cf. Rotter, 1980). Echoing Adorno et al (1950), the propensity of people collectively to seek out and follow claims of 'fact' or 'truth' - or even so-called 'common sense' - can, when pursued gullibly, lead to dire social consequences. This is one reason why the ubiquity of 'zero definitions' of trust in international management literature is a source of professional concern. Echoing Foucault (1980) and Western (2008), one approach towards avoiding such consequences is to accept 'expert' claims only after a process of critical evaluation: i.e. what Western (2008) terms initially 'looking awry' at such claims.

A critical approach

As highlighted above, one distinguishing feature of this current study in comparison with the Robinson (1996) and Atkinson (2007) research is that it targets interaction with a sample population of international employees, ninety per cent of whom use English as a *lingua franca* and as an expression of their professional identity as international employees. By eliciting the meanings these employees attribute to trust I am inviting them to create an individualised and critical 'outsider' perspective on the scholarly discourse represented by *Figure 1*. Paraphrasing from Foucault (1970), their testimony might serve to challenge the 'order of things' contextualising trust in *Figure 1* and thus make a contribution both to future contract research and to their own understanding of how employment relationships might be perceived to succeed or fail.

Against this background, and echoing Western (2008), the discussion in the following chapters is guided by four primary considerations:

- Adopting a hermeneutic or interpretive stance from which to explore meanings attributed to 'trust' by specialist trust researchers – an approach illustrated in chapter two.
- Comparing diverse scholarly and practitioner perspectives on *Figure 1* as representing a theory of how and why people trust in contexts for employment – an approach illustrated in chapter three.
- Comparing diverse scholarly and practitioner perspectives on what the phrase 'trust in the psychological contract' might mean in contexts for international employment – an approach illustrated in chapter four.

As a general strategy this study seeks to elicit and synthesise comments and insights from multiple perspectives in an attempt to 'bridge' from processes of trust research to processes of IHRM practice and research (cf. Manstead & Semin, 1988). Correspondingly, it uses *Figure 1* and other representations of the contract to frame the currently diffuse interpretations of 'trust' available from multi-disciplinary research into this complex and vital social phenomenon.

1.7 Audience

Echoing Robinson (1996) and Atkinson (2007) this study focuses on eliciting respondent perceptions, experiences and expectations associated with interpersonal work-based relationships: i.e. it focuses on interpersonal (person-to-person or *dyadic*) as opposed to inter-organisational or inter-group trust (cf. Zaheer et al, 1998; Six, 2005; Currell & Inkpen, 2006). By design this study foregrounds the dyadic researcher-researchee relationship as one such interpersonal relationship and as one where, if trust can inform its development, valid research data and insights about trust in professional relationships might emerge. In this sense, the research focus becomes part of the research process much as this text (discourse *product*) represents underlying (discourse) processes of writing and researching. A core feature of the research relationship sees both parties sharing and validating data in order (potentially) to generate a common basis for professional learning and development (cf. Kolb, 1984). In this sense, the research participants are emphasised as the immediate beneficiaries of – or 'audience' for – this research.

Involving the research respondents in this way emphasises their status as 'research stakeholders'. Robson (2002:552) defines these as 'everyone in an organization or other focus of a research study who has some interest (stake) in the research and its outcomes'. Highlighting the interests of stakeholders serves also to highlight the ethical dimensions of trust research (cf. Banerjee et al, 2006). When exploring something as intimate as trust researchers are ethically obliged to ensure that no harm comes to the respondents involved: pursuit of a

research objective should not take precedence over the interests of nominated research stakeholders (Jackson & Schwegler, 2005).

In terms of research outcomes this study seeks to address the interests of what Levitt (1993) identifies as 'scholar-practitioners' within various fields of management: in this case, scholar-practitioners of IHRM. For, as Rousseau (2001:511) maintains:

- *The purpose of more closely examining (the) core elements of psychological contract theory is to encourage prospective research on how psychological contracts are formed and in doing so better specify conditions under which psychological contracts can be effectively kept and revised.*

By eliciting and working with primary data this study seeks to shed light on how employees relate to their line-managers, project team leaders, and other managers with an HRM / IHRM responsibility and opportunity. This study proceeds on the assumption that working with employees designated as 'international' is likely to generate critical insights into what the English phrase 'trust in the psychological contract' might mean conceptually and in contexts for international employment / career development. The intention is to develop a rich, critical and cross-cultural perspective on trust that might help practitioners understand or even predict when these employees might choose to quit or stay, and notably against the background of global business trends described above. Consequently, this study is designed to generate insights that might be of strategic relevance to HRM / IHRM practitioners. To this end some extracts of this study have already been published in book form (cf. Jackson & Tomioka, 2004) and others have informed the design and delivery of in-service training and educational materials for international managers (cf. Jackson, 2007a). Furthermore, the narrative structure of the study supports nine input sessions on Masters degree courses in international management (IM) and IHRM.

Ultimately, however, this study should satisfy an audience of scholar-practitioners nominated as examiners of this text and its status as a PhD dissertation.

1.8 The structure of this study

Both the Robinson (1996) and Atkinson (2007) studies derive from doctoral research conducted by the two researchers involved. Each study is highly impressive in its own right and stands as an inspiration in the strategic development of this current study. To illustrate, the longitudinal structure adopted by Robinson (1996) prompted the adoption of a three 'anchorings' approach (conceptual, temporal, and spatial/individual), as reflected in the organisation of this study into three 'Parts' as follows:

Part One develops the theme of 'exploration'. It 'anchors' this study conceptually in current streams of research.

The discussion here in **chapter one** highlights some of the complexities inherent in the phrase 'trust in the psychological contract': inspired by existing research, and prompted by global business development, it outlines an approach towards mapping and exploring this complexity.

Chapter two presents a review of existing research into trust, drawing on examples and insights from experimental, conceptual and empirical research and locating this current study in these research streams.

Chapter three extends the review of trust research by exploring connections to international research into the psychological contract. The location of 'trust' exclusively as a content element in the contract is conceptually challenged.

Chapter four describes what 'an international employee perspective' on 'trust in the psychological contract' might look like, drawing on current IHRM research.

Part Two develops on the theme of 'first encounters' established in Part One. It temporally 'anchors' the research relationship with respondents and other stakeholders through preliminary studies towards a resultant research design.

Chapter five details the preliminary studies designed to initiate the research relationship with a sample population of international employees.

Chapter six details the research design that emerged from the processes of literature review and preliminary studies. The focus here becomes one of establishing a mutually beneficial and (where feasible) trusting researcher-researchee relationship that should inform the primary studies of Part Three.

Part Three works towards 'testing the boundaries of established research' (Phillips & Pugh, 2006). Trust is 'anchored' spatially within *Figure 1* and becomes the initial focus for a dyadic and critical dialogue. During this extensive process trust becomes 'anchored' in the professional reflection of individual respondents and (it is hoped) in the researcher-researchee relationship and in the professional learning experience of individual respondents. It is here that the main contributions of this study emerge, along with some of its key limitations.

Chapter seven presents data from a series of semi-structured interviews designed to locate trust spatially in conceptualisations and interpretations of the psychological contract: the aforementioned 'international employee perspective' emerges. The location of trust exclusively as a content element in the contract is empirically challenged.

Chapter eight presents data generated by a series of research conversations designed to provide an individual anchoring for international employee interpretations of trust in employment relationships generally.

Chapter nine concludes by examining the extent to which the research objective presented in this introductory chapter has been achieved. It highlights the contributions and inevitable limitations of this study, twinning these with recommendations for future research.

1.9 Summary

The discussion in this introductory chapter has posited a research objective and put into the context the title: 'trust in the psychological contract: an international employee perspective'. Initial definitions of key terms have been offered - a process that continues in the following chapters. Furthermore, the structure and purpose of this current study in comparison to existing research has been illustrated, thus providing a context within which the relevance of this study to IHRM researchers and practitioners might be assessed.

Chapter 2: A review of trust research

People are not born humane, they must learn to become so

Confucius (*Analects* 12:22)

2.0 Introduction

This chapter offers an overview of trust research. It is *per force* selective: the corpus of trust literature is both multi-disciplinary and vast. Drawing on Macdonald and Tipton (1993), Denscombe (1998) and Bryman (2001), the following selection criteria have been applied:

- *Credibility*: the sources have been subject to peer review, are cited in academic publications, or have been presented at academic conferences
- *Representativeness*: the sources capture themes relevant to current and emergent trust research
- *Meaningfulness*: the sources inform and guide the exploration stated in the research objective presented in chapter one.

The selection and review processes reflect the critical approach outlined in chapter by recognising how research literature represents a particularised form of discourse: it claims attention and authoritative insight (cf. Western, 2008). To illustrate, one text routinely receiving copious 'hits' during on-line searches for 'trust' is the Fukuyama (1995) text. One reading of this text reveals a learned discussion of how trust is central to human development in political, legal, economic and moral spheres of social activity. A second reading identifies the text as an ideologically driven attempt to identify US American society as 'more trusting' than other societies (Fukuyama, 1995) and therefore more entrepreneurial and developed in support of political and economic institutions (Fukuyama, 2000). Fukuyama links his conceptualisation of 'trust' to 'human nature' and a 'reconstitution of social order' (Fukuyama, 1996). His analysis finds support among scholars of behavioural science who claim that 'people with a higher income are, on average, more trusting than those on a lower income' because they have more 'leeway' in their trust of strangers (Sato, 2007b:31). Such empirically verified 'findings' lend legitimacy to the US American model as

a 'normative' template outlining 'first principles governing social and political organisation' (Griffiths et al, 2002:91). With Fukuyama's alleged support this model has been imposed subsequently in Iraq. Echoing Phillips and Pugh (2006), new researchers need to make their own position and biases clear when confronting those claimed by established and even renowned researchers.

2.1 A brief history of trust research

A literature review locates a chosen research topic within an existing corpus of research. A critical review might also identify 'gaps' that appear to offer new researchers the opportunity to complement existing research, bridging between the more and the less known. As a product and process of discourse it represents a spatial and temporal anchoring for new research. An explorer new to trust research might scan the terrain ahead and identify the following historically embedded features.

Multi-disciplinarity

The corpus of trust research extends across academic disciplines. These include sociology (cf. Fox, 1974; Gambetta, 1988; Govier, 1997; Sztompka, 1999; Giddens, 2009), economics (cf. Khalil, 2003; Casson & Della Giusta, 2006), psychology (cf. Deutsch, 1973; MacLeod, 2006) and, as an expression of *faith*, anthropology and studies in religion (Mead, 1972). Exploring trust in the psychological contract leads towards exploring insights gleaned by social psychologists researching trust (cf. Luhmann, 1979; Cook, 2001; Cook et al, 2005), and from here to explorations of trust in developmental psychology (cf. Erikson, 1969; Vygotsky, 1978). To understand the formation of these various academic disciplines or 'lines' of scientific enquiry (Kuhn, 1962:3) it is instructive to trace something of the history of trust research – a history rooted in studies of philosophy and ethics, and in debates over who or what might be perceived as more or less moral in terms of the trusting attitudes and behaviours they appear to express.

History

Research into trust has a long history. As cited in chapter one, the English word 'trust' is etymologically related to conceptualisations of 'truth' and remains one of the most complex words in English and, indeed, in any language (Williams, 1985). In combination both concepts attract myriad connotations.

To illustrate, in his *Republic* Plato was exercised to link trust in ethical and political terms to 'justice': scholars as teachers should be perceived as trustworthy for their guidance to appear just (Plato, 1974). However, this was a one-way trusting relationship: ordinary citizens should not question the balanced wisdom of philosopher-rulers. Sunzi in the *Art of War* advised leaders against expressing trust beyond self-trust as doing so might undermine their perceived effectiveness of a leader; unless, that is, they choose to appear trustworthy (e.g. 'vulnerable') as a ploy designed to encourage enemies to disclose their own vulnerability (Sun et al, 2008). Niccolò Machiavelli recommends a similar 'management of perceptions' approach to *Il Principe* of sixteenth century Florence. Leaders of state should be of a virtuous and compassionate nature and exude integrity; above all, they should manage to *appear* trustworthy (Machiavelli, 1950). Around the same time and place Dante (1960) makes a virtue out of trust - *fidanza*, or modern-day Italian *fiducia*. He equates it to 'hope' (*speranza*) and consigns *en masse* to *l'Inferno* fraudsters who, in Dante's terms, have denied that trust as hope (e.g. 'positive expectation') is the necessary bond in all human social relationships, including trade - a sentiment echoed more recently in global business terms by John Child (2001).

Nearer to home Thomas Hobbes in his *Leviathan* (1982) suggested that subordinate trust in the wisdom and justice of a sovereign leader could help people in seventeenth century Europe achieve social, political and ethical stability: like Confucius (cited at the top of this chapter) Hobbes was writing during a period of civil war – a period subsequently termed the 'Age of Reason' across Europe (cf. Hampshire, 1956). Hobbes holds the conceptual relationship between trust and mistrust / distrust (concepts used interchangeably here) as fundamental to understanding the social and economic inequalities that define any human society or group, and particularly in observation of inhumane

behaviours during times of national and international strife. Hobbes ascribes the responsibility to 'manage' these inequalities to a strong ruler, claiming thereby that trust might form the core of a 'social contract' between a sovereign and his / her citizens, a notion subsequently developed in more revolutionary and affective terms by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762). Unlike *Il Principe*, but as in Plato's *Republic*, Hobbes envisaged this seat of virtuous authority being shared among groups of trustworthy people.

In his *Ethics* Aristotle posited that trust-based relationships such as friendship between virtuous equals helps human beings develop (2004): i.e. become 'humane' as (echoing Confucius) they 'learn' how to trust and be perceived as virtuous and trustworthy. This experience of learning might or might not be experienced as a reward: for, as Flores and Solomon (1998:208) claim:

- *Like many virtues, trust is most virtuous when it is pursued for its own sake, even if there is benefit or advantage in view*

This altruistic interpretation of individual human trusting attitudes and behaviours that appear to go beyond self-interest is a central concern of the Scottish philosopher David Hume. In his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40) Hume (2004) argued that human beings as social actors naturally harboured concern for other people's apparent disadvantages in life - guiding principle in the so-called 'charitable' or 'volunteer sector' in international business today. Here the stewardship or 'management' towards a firmer anchoring of trust in social relationships generally could be achieved not merely by 'top-down' coercion as suggested by Hobbes. Rather it could be achieved more humanely by a less controlling and more altruistic expression of communal encouragement - an expression that could in general be articulated more eloquently by people better positioned in the social-economic hierarchy.

Competing interests

As a moral statement this line of empirically and ethical assumption is complex. There remains a tense interaction between value-judgements on

conceptualisations and observations of human selfishness and altruism and in processes of attributing trust as a virtue or complex moral value both to people and to 'things' such as institutions or organisations (cf. Hardin, 1998; Uslaner, 2002). To illustrate from what is now commonly accepted as being a burgeoning business sector worldwide (cf. Cameron, 2004), so-called 'not for profit' organisations (NPOs) commonly remain in fiduciary terms subject to the regulatory if not direct management control of national governments: i.e. through their headquarter buildings and addresses they remain anchored in what Ohmae (2001) terms the 'visible dimension'. NPOs include the type of charitable institutions that emerge across societies where altruistic people come together in order to achieve social, economic and (perhaps) moral impact – an endeavour reflected in the values and mission statements that shape the distinctive management cultures and thus employment relationships in such organisations (cf. Drucker, 1990; Tyler, 2003): relationships that might appear even more complex when adopting an international employee perspective on such organisations.

Increasingly, the business and moral interests that guide the strategic formation and activities of NPOs combine with national and trans-national organisations such as 'non-governmental organisations' (NGOs) that together form what is called 'civil society' (cf. Edwards, 2004). These interests commonly come into conflict with those of the 'for profit' organisations (FPOs) that make up private or commercial business sectors worldwide. Conflict arises not only in terms of the social, economic and (perhaps) moral impact that the organisations of each sector are trying achieve – one thinks here of current developments linking 'trust' and 'perceptions of trustworthiness' as strategic (if intangible) moral 'assets' in attempts to manage processes of 'corporate social responsibility' (CSR), where managers attempt to communicate 'positive intentions' (cf. Rousseau et al, 1998) beyond what stakeholders might observe as the organisation's current business behaviour (cf. Crowther & Capaldi, 2008).

In consideration of the role that financial institutions and, by extension, money as a tangible asset might play in defining competing intentions and interests Georg Simmel (1907:178) warns that 'without the general trust people have in

each other, society itself would disintegrate'. Without assuming naively that 'money makes the world go round' a common cause of social and business conflict arises in terms of the resource support (including trust) that the organisations across sectors appear to receive from national governments and other political and legal institutions: a conflict of interests that suggests a conflict of discourses and hence a conflict of cultures (Avruch, 2002). Analysing the causes, processes and consequences of such conflicts helps explain the ongoing scholarly concern with tracking shifting social attitudes and values and the extent to which civil populations might trust 'their' governments and other institutions more or less over time (cf. Fukuyama, 1995, 2000; Tyler, 2001) – an endeavour, as illustrated above, deeply rooted in the history of philosophical, political and ethical enquiry; an endeavour reflected modestly in this current study.

2.2 Working with researcher bias

Researcher bias is inevitable (Robson, 2002): each trust researcher proceeds from a unique position of experience, knowledge and expectation; each has their own research intention. The critical reading of the Fukuyama (1995) text introducing this chapter is designed to illustrate how the most frequently cited authors and research texts are not necessarily the most reliable (cf. Moed, 2005). Furthermore, identifying a distinctive multi-disciplinarity in trust research does not mean that trust researchers routinely communicate across disciplines. Some researchers combine to explore cross-disciplinary 'views of trust' (cf. Rousseau et al, 1998). Others choose not to. To illustrate, the on-line 'trust' resource maintained by the then prominent Stanford psychologist Carolyn MacLeod (2006 – *accessed 29th September 2008*) avoids reference to the work of the prominent Stanford social psychologist Karen Cook, although she does refer to an ongoing collaboration in trust research. This insight appears to confirm an enduring sense of territoriality common to the 'academic tribes' and subcultures (cf. Becher, 1989; Becher & Trowler, 2001). Often, the task of collaborative convergence is left to editors such as Bachmann and Zaheer (2006), although

even here again a 'clash' of research cultures across disciplines and national research systems can be evinced (Reinhard Bachmann, 2007 - *personal communication*).

Comparing scholarly perspectives

Annette Baier is a New Zealand born scholar of David Hume. Baier similarly seeks the source of ethical behaviour in the individual – behaviour that becomes moral when shared with others on the basis of trust. Echoing Rousseau et al (1998) and Banerjee et al (2006) Baier is occupied by the fundamental human experience of *vulnerability*. Like Hume she assumes a natural human propensity to compare between two actual or perceptual states: e.g. more or less vulnerable. People work towards one state on the basis of self-knowledge and as an ethical act (cf. Baier, 1986). Echoing Maslow (1954) she recognises how a shared sense of vulnerability might motivate individuals to form 'moral communities': they recognise and empathise with the vulnerability attributed to the other. One of the striking aspects of her analysis is the feminist perspective she develops on human trusting attitudes and behaviours. She posits that women naturally / biologically respond to a different system of ethics than men. Women trust differently than men in socio-cultural terms also because, throughout history, women have been caused to experience their vulnerability differently than men. Echoing Foucault (1970, 1980), the dominant discourse of social history is male and striking in its emphasis on cognitive obligation and rational causality while underestimating the female 'ethics of love' (Baier, 1983). If this insight is valid then the implications for empirical trust-based research are profound. To illustrate, for purposes of triangulation should men be interviewed by men, and then by women, and then by men again – and *vice versa*? Should researchers incorporate gender-specific sub-dimensions or values to the survey items they employ and correlate these into their data analysis?

Russell Hardin (1992) responds with vigour to Baier's bi-polar analysis, notably as expressed in the 'trust and anti-trust' conceptualisation published in *Ethics* in 1986. Writing for *Politics and Society* Hardin adopts a so-called 'street-level'

perspective on Baier's claims with regard to a gender-specific 'epistemology of trust'. Eschewing the 'Bayesian assessment' Hardin encourages trust researchers to elicit and understand the 'knowledge of the potential trustor, not that of the theorist or social scientist who observes or analyzes trust' (Hardin, 1992:505). In respect of the whether decisions to engage in trust decisions might, from past experiences or observations, be applied from the moral standpoint of the reflective trust researcher to current or predicted behaviours of people Hardin (1992:508) argues that:

- *If we wish to understand trust for real people, what we will have to understand are the capacities for commitment and trust, which must largely be learned. Hence we must understand from the commonsense epistemology of the individual in a position to trust or distrust*

The invocation of 'trust for real people' appears cutting in relation to Baier and the moral philosophers who inspire her. The emphasis on 'a learned' human capacity to trust' (Hardin, 1992:523) locates the choice to trust well or wisely in the world as each individual finds and experiences it each day rather than from within some idealised 'moral community'. Hardin challenges the moral consistency of such a community by positing the scenario where a stranger seeks access (1992:521-2). In local perception this stranger might appear untrustworthy and therefore not be accepted: community members might fail to recognise the social-economic vulnerability of the other. The community might thereby lose an opportunity to diversify, learn and expand its moral awareness and knowledge. Given that much empirical trust research today focuses on how strangers interact (for example) in contexts for e-commerce (cf. Knights, 2001; McKnight & Chervany, 2001), this conceptual limitation (if valid) appears to locate Baier's 'community' more in the 'visible' rather than in the 'cyber' dimension for human interaction described by Ohmae (2001). However, it would be equally valid to claim that the ethical dilemmas and indeed mapping of the territory for conceptual research into trust is far from complete, as this brief historical overview has illustrated.

For now it is instructive to recognise how Hardin's promotion of a 'street-level' perspective appears to encourage empirical and indeed ethnographic

approaches to trust research: e.g. the type of research conducted by Gambetta and Hamill (2006) eliciting how taxi drivers assess the relative trustworthiness of their customers or 'fares'. However, such ethnographic research also requires a firm conceptual base. To this objective Hardin (1992) develops offers the notion of trust as 'encapsulated interest', whereby the would-be truster / trustor (i.e. the person moves to risk trusting) can put him-/ her-self in the position of the would-be trustee: i.e. the intended recipient of trust. Using what Hardin (1992) appears to invoke as 'common sense' the would-be trustor uses reason and affect to explain why it is in the would-be trustee's interests to respond or otherwise behave in ways that do not cause the trustor to withdraw his / her trust. Trusting and being perceived as trustworthy benefits both: 'I trust you because your interest encapsulates mine, which is to say that you have an interest in fulfilling my trust' (Hardin, 2002:3).

Contrived across the space and time of separate and competing journal publications the Hardin-Baier 'debate' can (from an outsider perspective) appear overly occupied with some expressions of ownership over whose understanding of (for example) 'common sense' is the more socially or epistemologically valid or durable, and thereby the more authoritative (cf. Western, 2008). Common sense is a human perception, not a human capacity. For what appears 'commonsensical' to one person might from another perspective resemble madness (cf. Foucault, 1977). In developed East Asian cultures, for example, appealing to 'common sense' represents an appeal to social conformity (cf. Jackson & Tomioka, 2004) – an appeal that draws in trust and psychological contract researchers also. For a parallel though apparently less abrasive example of scholarly debate is where Rousseau (1998) and Guest (1998) discuss across the Atlantic about whether the psychological contract should be interpreted as a (management) 'model' or as a (socio-culturally embedded) 'metaphor' - a debate informed primarily by reference to discourse styles and where (research) process becomes (research) product, which again feeds into research process. Consequently, one lesson that new entrants to the terrain of trust research can learn from these examples of scholarly debate is the need to examine each discipline-specific discussion for evidence of researcher bias. This entails

applying the review selection criteria critically and employing an 'open system of thought' (Phillips & Pugh, 2006:48). Overall, this literature review has been illuminated by listening to eminent trust researchers admit that 'we still don't really know what trust is' (Karen Cook, 2008 - *personal communication*) and pose questions such as: 'Talking about trust, when did an economist you know last read Erikson?' (Kurt T. Dirks, 2007 - *personal communication*).

2.3 Comparing approaches to trust research

The diversity apparent in the discourse of established trust research arises partly out of the inherently paradoxical nature of human trusting behaviour and of trust as both a complex social phenomenon and generally familiar research concept (cf. Möllering, 2001; Nooteboom, 2006). Consequently, one immediate indication of researcher bias is evident in the approach they adopt towards researching trust. For, however one researcher chooses to define 'trust' conceptually the phenomenon itself only really takes shape through the research process. The following discussion outlines three common research approaches designed to render human trusting attitudes and behaviours visible, observable, and (in theory) measurable: experimental, conceptual, and (in a separate section below) empirical.

Experimental research

Saunders et al (2002) explain how experimental research builds on approaches established in studies of natural sciences such as physics and, more recently, on developments in behavioural sciences such as human and animal psychology. In pursuit of research reliability / replicability of the experiment the emphasis tends to be on researcher control of inputs such as parsimoniously formulated research hypotheses and sampling from known populations. These samples are introduced to planned changes in order that researchers might observe and record modifications in their behaviour. Research outputs tend to be expressed in quantitative terms designed to attract sheens of research credibility (Saunders

et al, 2000:93). Many behavioural researchers choose not to disclose the focus on 'trust' in order to reduce threats such as 'social desirability': i.e. respondents giving the answers they think the researchers want to hear (cf. Robson, 2002). However, there is a counter-argument claiming that informing respondents they are involved in research focussed on trust will bias their responses anyway – and, as responses, in ways that are difficult for the researcher to predict and thereby reliably control and compute in quantitative terms. In relation to something as humanly intimate as trust, questions of research transparency inevitably raise further questions of research ethics (Jackson & Schwegler, 2005).

The prisoner's dilemma

One established experimental approach towards exploring people's trusting propensities and behaviour is a game known as 'the prisoner's dilemma' (cf. Casson & Della Giusta, 2006; van Witeloostuijn & van Wegberg, 2006). The following journal abstract by Yamagishi et al (2007) illustrates an application of this method:

- *Japanese (N = 48) and New Zealander (N = 55) participants were first assigned to one of two minimal groups, and then played a prisoner's dilemma game twice with an in-group member and twice with an out-group member. In one of the two games they played with an in-group (or out-group) member, participants and their partner knew one another's group memberships (mutual-knowledge condition). In the unilateral-knowledge condition, only the participants knew the group membership of their partner, but the partner did not know the group membership of the participant.*

Here again the issue of transparency / ethics is apparent, albeit in a context defined by the patterned heuristics of 'a game' that draws its assumptions from rational choice theory (cf. Kramer & Tyler, 1996). The key assumption is that human beings are rational social and economic actors, preferring (where possible) to make behavioural choices motivated primarily by self-preservation and interest (Morgenstern & Von Neumann, 1980). A standard version of the game puts two 'suspects' in jail and confronts them with a sheriff who needs oral

evidence in order to convict one or both of them. After isolating them in separate cells the sheriff invites each prisoner to betray the other, simultaneously outlining a series of 'pay off' or reward options. These commonly explain how, if both prisoners confess, they will each get six years in jail. If one confesses and the other doesn't, the one confessing will get two years and the other twelve. The 'dilemma' for each prisoner is to realise the least bad outcome from two unwelcome decisions: each recognises his / her deficit in respect of a 'mutual-knowledge condition' (Poundstone, 1992).

The version played out by Yamagishi et al (2007) constructs the 'mutual-knowledge condition' by telling each player the nationality of their first counterpart in the game, thus inviting them to apply culture-specific expectations of the other's behaviour. They are then instructed to predict how other players in their status as known 'in-group' or 'out-group' members might act. The test here is of whether each 'vulnerable' respondent's 'positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another' (Rousseau et al, 1998) will be met by members of another national cultural group. In short, this particular experiment builds on general theories of national or societal culture, assuming in-group congruence of attitudes and behaviours relevant to Japanese and New Zealanders (cf. Hofstede, 1980). Alternatively, it builds on conceptualisations of socio-cultural prejudice (Allport, 1958).

The 'dilemma' arises in response to the assumptions and expectations each player brings towards predicting the likely opportunistic / altruistic attitudes and behaviour of the other. Given the strictly controlled structure of the game, the emphasis in this prediction process is on risk rather than on perceptions of uncertainty. Psychological pressure to predict 'correctly' (this is a game, after all) comes from the understanding that if both prisoners were unwittingly to cooperate, they might significantly reduce the severity of the punishment given to one, to the other, or to both. The game thus simulates human propensities towards rational decision-making based on an emotional or perceptual promise of reward or release. From a research perspective, the context for observing and interpreting respondent choices is linearly and causally rational: i.e. cause 'X'

leads to consequence 'Y'. Nonetheless, it is and remains a 'game'. For, as Yamagishi (2005:848) explains:

- *It is irrational to behave in a trustworthy or a trustful manner in a game of trust that is artificially created in a laboratory*

The use of such 'irrational' games is a standard approach towards generating and publishing trust research data. Yamagishi (2005) argues that it benefits the respondents also as they learn to become more 'adaptive'; in addition they learn first-hand techniques common to experimental research. Because the respondents in this current study are in full-time employment the potential 'pay-off' offered to them is formulated in terms of shared professional learning and development – a design feature explained in more detail in chapter six.

Conceptual research

Prominent examples of conceptual research into trust have been discussed already in this chapter. Generalising from these examples it is worth noting how conceptual research proceeds and persuades primarily on the strength of its eloquence: i.e. its discourse as manifest in the words and images that the researchers themselves select and connect.

To illustrate, Karen Jones (1996) develops a conceptual exploration of 'trust as an affective attitude'. She describes this attitude fundamentally as one of 'optimism': i.e. what Rousseau et al (1998:395) would subsequently posit as 'the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another'. In her own words, Jones (1996:4) undertakes to:

- *defend an account of trust according to which trust is an attitude of optimism that the goodwill and competence of another will extend to cover the domain of our interaction with her, together with the expectation that the one trusted will be directly and favourably moved by the thought that we are counting on her.*

In fact, Jones uses the 'I' form in her discussion: 'I defend'. And already her use of 'her' and 'we' in the above declaration of intent is compelling, as is the suggestion that the intended 'trustee' might be 'moved' by the optimism that would-be trustors express towards her. Jones (1996:5) conceptualises 'trusting' as being 'composed of two elements, one cognitive and one effective or emotional'. Overall her argument is that when an attitude of trustor optimism become reward with an empathetic trustee response, an affective basis for a relationship might be established: or, drawing on the interpretation offered subsequently by Möllering: 'the people we like are those who care about us and who will therefore not exploit our trust' (2006a:45). Möllering explains how and why the debate in conceptual trust research continues as to the balance – and sequence – of affective and cognitive factors or 'dimensions' in how people appear to trust.

Several insights offered by the Jones (1996) article are worth highlighting in relation to the development of this current study. Firstly there is the emphasis given to trusting (i.e. trust as process) as opposed to 'trust': i.e. trust as verb or noun (cf. Collins, 2005). This is an emphasis that re-occurs prominently in discussion of 'trust in the psychological contract' in chapter three and one that is gaining attention in current stress of conceptual and empirical trust research (cf. Wright & Ehnert, 2010). Secondly there is the emphasis given to optimism and the expectation (*speranza?*) of positively intentional reciprocation in the interaction between trustor and trustee. Here it should be noted that Jones (1996) cites supportively from Baier (1986): the implication is that genuine trust is exchanged between moral equals. It is therefore interesting to see how Möllering (2006a) picks up on the assumption that trustors and trustees might like each other in order that affective and cognitive considerations might achieve some balance meaningful and (perhaps) sustainable to the parties involved. However, already in chapter one it was suggested that trusting people is not the same as liking them: at least, not in contexts for HRM (Drucker, 1990).

Thirdly, and to an extent not possible to reproduce here, there is the stylistic eloquence of the Jones (1996) article. She weaves her opening gambit (cited above) through each of the staged mini-conclusions of her argument. For example, the phrase 'favourably moved by the thought that we are counting on

her' becomes like a trope that works throughout the piece. In poetic terms this style of text construction would equate to a 'conceit' (cf. Preminger & Brogan, 1993). Overall, its effect on the reader is mesmerising.

The function of trust

Equally compelling is the work of Niklas Luhmann, a prominent German social scientist and researcher whose thinking on the subject of trust and expressed through the medium of several languages continues to influence conceptual and empirical trust researcher today (cf. Child & Möllering, 2003; Giddens, 2006; Möllering 2006a). To illustrate, Luhmann (1979, 1988) explores specific questions about the 'function of trust' and seeks to delineate trust from, for example, overlapping concepts such as 'familiarity' and 'confidence'. According to Luhmann each concept expresses some aspect of people's propensity to form expectations. Assuming 'familiarity' to be 'an unavoidable fact of life' Luhmann conceptualises the 'fact' that emerges as people individually and collectively seek to render the unfamiliar familiar (Luhmann, 1988:95). It is here that the function of trust becomes apparent and complex, as people combine and work to diverse expectations. These include those that might be expressed rather generally in terms of 'confidence' in institutions: e.g. the organisation recognised more familiarly as an employer that physically and perceptually should be there to attend each working day and, possibly, form the context within which an individual employee might plan and realise (through time) a career – an attitude commonly attributed to employees of PSOs where, by tradition, the structures of individual career paths tend to be bureaucratically organised (cf. Tyler, 2003; Flynn, 2007). As illustrated in chapter three, this expectation among employees appears to be changing across organisations worldwide.

The type of expectations more specifically related to 'trust' or 'perceived trustworthiness' is one that might be attributed to interpersonal relationships highlighted by, for example, Daniel McAllister and other prominent empirical trust researchers. In contexts for employment the 'absence or presence of trust' (McAllister 1996:34) might describe the current state of relationship between an

employee and line-managers who appear or claim to represent the organisation and, from an employee perspective, appear to aid or hinder individual expectations of a career; or, at a more basic level, job security. Paraphrasing from Luhmann (1998), if an employee perceives his / her line-manager to be untrustworthy and thereby sense his / her vulnerability to malevolent behaviour, might an overriding source of support or reassurance might be found in the broader 'contextual confidence' perceived to be offered by the organisation as an employer; or perhaps by the collective 'they' of 'management'? Failing this, the employee might expect recourse to institutions accessible both within and beyond the organisation's fiduciary boundaries such as trade unions and employment tribunals (cf. Dietz, 2004).

Given the ambiguity, uncertainty or perceived complexity common to each person's experience of life and (by extension) employment relationships, forming expectations of oneself and of others simultaneously invokes the risk of disappointment or, as implied above, unfulfilled expectation. Paraphrasing from Luhmann (1988), without this risk of personal and / or professional disappointment there would be no reason to trust. Paraphrasing from Lewis and Weigert (1985), trusting people is risky; however, not trusting them is also risky as it might (in retrospect, perhaps) represent a missed opportunity, as with Hardin's (1992) 'stranger' scenario. In essence, 'trust' can be interpreted simultaneously as offering 'a solution for specific problems of risk' (Luhmann, 1988:95) – an insight that suggests already how trust might be interpreted as both cause and solution of the risk inherent in all social and interpersonal relationships, including those relevant to contexts for international employment.

2.4 Developments in empirical trust research

Unlike conceptual research, empirical research assumes that the phenomena under investigation might be observed and perceived directly as experience: e.g. trust as a combined sociological and psychological phenomenon. The term 'empirical' derives from ancient Greek practices in medicine, where a particular line of treatment might be conceived and then tested out in social realities

removed from the original research context. The clinical intervention in such contexts represented the 'critical incident' after which the health of the patient might improve or deteriorate (Ayto, 1990). It is interesting to note how this historical interpretation of 'critical incidents' has become standard in processes of empirical research, as in the Atkinson (2007) empirical study reviewed in chapter one.

Connecting between conceptual and empirical research

Over time, social scientific research tends to lead to some level of consensus on a topic. As a result, 'research paradigms' form as and when agreed by influential groups of researchers (Kuhn, 1962). As scholars seek to identify themselves with one or other paradigms conflicts or 'debates' might arise: the scarce resource here might be peer recognition. However, another consequence might be normatively to lead new and established researchers into predominantly 'tradition-bound activity' (Kuhn, 1962:6). The multi-disciplinarity distinguishing trust research appears to hinder the development of a stable paradigm and thus might appear to encourage innovative research. A multitude of research pathways remain both open and relatively uncharted. The range of choice appears in what Bart Nooteboom (2006:247) identifies as the 'paradoxical' nature of trust in that it:

- *Goes beyond self-interest yet has limits*
- *Entails a state of mind and a type of action*
- *Is based on information or the lack of it*
- *Is rational and emotional*
- *Is both a basis and an outcome of relations*

In an illustration of how the latter two qualities of trust might be conceptualised and researched empirically Daniel McAllister explores the 'nature and functioning of relationships of interpersonal trust among managers and professionals in organizations' (1995:24). Similar to the Robinson (1996), McAllister works with a sample population comprising 197 'managers and professionals' attending an executive (i.e. part-time) MBA programme 'of a major university in southern California' (1995:34). Only 80 of the 197 professionals

participated to completion. McAllister's research is exploratory. It uses a cross-sectional survey to develop and test empirically 'a theoretical framework for studying interpersonal trust in organizations, the factors influencing the development of trust relationships, and the mechanisms by which trust influences behavior in interdependent relationships and, ultimately, the efficiency with which coordinated action is maintained' (1995:55). One enduring feature of this framework is that it appears to pre-empt the Jones (1996) emphasis on both 'affective' and 'cognitive' dimensions of dyadic trust-based relationships, thus illustrating in terms that might be correlated systematically the 'rational and emotional' paradox of trust highlighted by Nooteboom (2006).

As his conceptual base McAllister (1995) draws on, for example, Lewis and Weigert who posit that trust 'in everyday life is a mix of feeling and rational thinking' (1985:972). He further draws on Luhmann (1979) in positing trust firmly at the individual / interpersonal rather than at the organisational / institutional level of analysis, and in recognising how people build trust using the knowledge they gain from and of the people they interact socially using this knowledge as a basis for future action: e.g. in terms of what each individual might decide to do, or say, or not do or say. From this base McAllister seeks to elicit how the employees in his EMBA group tend or prefer to relate to their peers (i.e. fellow 'professionals') in the various organisations they represent. He stipulates they should give data about how they relate to managers working 'in functional areas different from their own' and 'with whom they had significant work-related interaction' (1995:34). McAllister focuses on these 'lateral' or cross-organisational channels of communication and professional 'interdependence' (cf. Banerjee et al, 2006) because he recognises how i) this is where 'the impact of trust's presence or absence' is likely to be experienced by these professionals most immediately and vividly on an daily working basis (1995:34) and ii) because it is the quality of this lateral communication that is likely to most influence the perceptions of external stakeholders to the organisation: a potential source of competitive advantage alluded to in discussion linking trust, ethics and CSR above.

Each of McAllister's respondents should nominate three to five people they believe they work 'best' and 'least well' with, thus connecting with 'basis and outcome of relations' paradox invoked by Nooteboom (2006) above. The data allows him to draw up a grid of more and less effectively working examples of dyadic interpersonal cooperation in organisations, arranging the survey items such that 'the beliefs of managers about the trustworthiness of peers can be measured along two dimensions, the extent of affect-based trust and the extent of cognition-based trust' (1995:51). One strong example of the latter dimension is a manager's knowledge about how a peer's supervisor rates the peer's overall performance.

However, it is the upgrading of research understanding about the affective dimensions of professional relationships that can be considered one of McAllister's most striking contributions: as such, it is surprising that Jones (1996) fails to cite him. McAllister's insights include managers who appreciate peers 'they could talk freely with' and 'know that he or she would want to listen and respond constructively and caringly' (1995:54) – insights familiar to the 'how to' be a trusted manager / business leader literature today (cf. Covey & Merrill, 2006). Correspondingly, this particular finding appears even more striking given McAllister's identification of a major research limitation: 'almost 75 percent of the study's participants were highly educated men' (1995:54). This insight prompts male managers – and trust researchers – to consider whether they might become more familiar with their 'feminine side' (cf. Goleman, 1995).

Another key limitation identified by McAllister observes the inherent weakness of relying exclusively on cross-sectional research designs: 'causality cannot be established from this study alone' (1995:54). This means that McAllister's framework can at best support a snapshot image of how these West Coast managers and professionals appear to respond and act both affectively and cognitively in their development of trust-based interpersonal relationships. It does not, however, give a clearly stated indication of *why*. It is useful here to recall how the Robinson (1996) study developed a longitudinal perspective to her survey data by designing three connected cross-sectional interventions. In pursuit of answers to 'why' in addition to 'how' questions this current study

attempts to supplement a cross-sectional survey about trust with a series of open-ended interviews and conversations about trust in interpersonal work-based relationships.

Typologies

McAllister's (1995) model balancing cognitive and affective dimensions of trust has done much to inspire subsequent empirical studies, including those with an expressly cross-cultural focus (cf. Schwegler, 2008). It has also served to embed conceptualisations of 'affective/ affect-based trust' into the mainstream of trust research (cf. Nooteboom, 2006). Indeed, there currently appears to be a fractalising tendency among prominent trust researchers such that new entrants to the terrain encounter a myriad array of trust definitions and types. It is as if becoming established a researcher in this complex terrain requires planting a 'stake' that expresses a novel elaboration of a root morpheme of 'trust'. To illustrate, one benchmark compendium of trust research (Bachmann & Zaheer, 2006) indexes the following 'types' of trust: *as-if trust; attitudinal trust; behavioural trust; blind trust; calculative trust; cognitive-based trust; cognitive trust; collective trust; competence trust; damaged trust*. The list encompasses a further thirty items and builds on typologies presented in previous edited collections, each standing as a milestone in trust research. These include: Gambetta (1988), Fukuyama (1995), Kramer & Tyler (1996), Lane and Bachmann (1998), Nooteboom (2002). In addition, there are research and publishing centres such as the Russell Sage Foundation in New York whose contribution to inter-disciplinary research routinely highlights trust (cf. Hardin, 2002; Cook et al, 2005). As a pragmatic response, McKnight and Chervany (1996) suggested that researchers new to the field should begin with 'common language definitions' of trust in order to establish a temporary bridge between the cultures of academic enquiry and lay experience. Still today, the momentum of trust research appears designed to generate competing taxonomies and thus emulate the micro-endeavours of encyclopaedists in eighteenth century Europe – the aforementioned 'Age of Reason' in which the discourse of social scientific enquiry emerged.

2.5 Theorising trust

One common objective of conducting a literature review is to discover and work with an established theory that, when supplied with new data, might be tested and / or give support to a fresh line of scholarly enquiry (cf. Phillips & Pugh, 2006). Working to an established theoretical framework acts like a map and adds discipline and direction to the ambitions of novice researchers: it guides new explorations. However, and mirroring the typology problem outlined above, choosing one theory to work to is problematic. As illustrated above, the so-called prisoner's dilemma derives from applications of rational choice theory. Other theoretical constructs commonly used to guide trust research include *agency theory* (Gambetta, 1988; Kramer & Tyler, 1996), *attribution theory* (Lewicki & Bunker, 1996; Dirks, 2006), and *social exchange theory* (Blau, 1964; Fukuyama, 1995; van de Ven & Smith Ring, 2006; Cook et al, 2005). According to O'Brien: 'different theories bring different aspects of the world into view: theories are like the lenses of the kaleidoscope; when you slot different ones into place things you could not see before suddenly become visible; patterns that were indistinct become sharper' (1993:11). Thus, one overarching purpose of a literature review is to examine how other researchers have used or developed theories relevant to the social phenomenon of trust. Intriguingly in this respect, Child (2001:274) claims that 'trust remains an under-theorized, under-researched, and, therefore, poorly understood phenomenon'. Based on the discussion thus far, 'poorly understood', perhaps, but hardly 'under-theorised'!

Social exchange theory

According to Blau (1964:91) social exchange represents 'the voluntary actions of individuals that are motivated by the returns (their actions) are expected to bring and typically do in fact (bring) from others'. The phrase 'typically do in fact' expresses a confidence that this is how human social interaction works: i.e. premised on some instrumental gain-seeking intent. Blau also explains how the nature of the 'return' is not always specified in advance, whereas in *economic exchange theory* some calculation of return does tend to precede the risk-laden

decision to trust. This focus on exchange is relevant here, as it appears to connect more readily to an exploration of trust in the psychological contract and, by extension, to trust in the employment relationship (cf. Rousseau, 1990; Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2003; Conway & Briner, 2007). Exchange theories claim to describe, explain and predict how trustors and trustees might interact in the initiation and development of trust-based relationships. In short, they claim to connect with the dynamic that gives the contract its social and psychological coherence. This particular invocation of social exchange theories proceeds from researcher assumptions about social norms of 'reciprocity' or the 'give and get' of social relationships (cf. Gouldner, 1960). At a fundamental level of exchange trustors are expected to reciprocate ('pay back') help or benefits given to them by trustees, commonly at some calculation of 'like for like' value: e.g. a rough calculation of mutual interest. At a similarly basic level reference to exchange explains why each party might tolerate uncertainty and vulnerability: each runs the risk of trusting a person or institution that appears (potentially) beneficial.

The so-called 'reciprocity condition' dictates that neither trustors nor trustees should appear to exploit those who have helped them (Conway & Briner, 2007:57). Echoing Banerjee et al (2006) the term 'exploit' becomes synonymous with one party actually or perceptibly threatening the other party's social, psychological and / or economic vulnerability: Blau (1964) makes descriptive reference to uneven social distributions of power. Given the aforementioned calculation dimension to the reciprocity concept it is possible to emphasise the decision to trust and / or perceive others as trustworthy as an expression of 'encapsulated' self-interest (cf. Hardin, 1998). People can choose to balance their (cognitive) interest in maintaining relationships for economic benefit and / or for love and friendship (Baier, 1986; Hardin, 2002).

Out of this balanced interpretation emerges the aforementioned definition of trust as 'a psychological state' prompted by 'positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another' (Rousseau et al, 1998:395). In contexts for negotiating psychological contracts employers are traditionally assumed to be more powerful or more potently resourced than individual employees, hence the inevitability of hierarchies within organisations (Handy, 1993; Mullins, 2005).

This might also explain the uneven distribution of trust as a resource across societies, allowing the speculation that people do not trust less than they did before (cf. Fukuyama, 2000). Rather, as the structure of local economies becomes more globalised, people might trust in different ways than they did before, an outcome of the 'irrevocable' impact of Ohmae's 'cyber dimension' currently framing human interaction worldwide – one thinks of social networking websites and mobile phone technology. Consequently, the 'distribution' of trust as a strategic asset or resource might be shifting away from locally established institutions to freer flows of individual action (Guido Möllering, 2007 - *personal communication*). This perspective on trust as a global resource or commodity is explored in chapter four.

Paraphrasing from Blau (1964), common experiences of social reality 'do in fact typically' suggest that trust also goes beyond limits set by 'self-interest' or, indeed, by self-preservation as depicted within the rational confines of social exchange theory (cf. Barber, 1983). One vulnerable party might not realise they are being exploited; one party might willingly and (to observers) paradoxically submit to exploitation out of a sense of loyalty and / or in order to preserve some semblance of 'trust' in the relationship – at least, for a calculated period of time and towards some self-generated purpose not immediately apparent to observers. The personality profile and hence immediate 'psychological state' of some individuals might compel them to seek the predictable haven of submissive dependency (cf. Rotter, 1980): one thinks here of drug addiction.

In organisational contexts issues of perceived and sought-after *mutual* dependency might explain the trusting behaviours of individual employees who seek a benign co-operative network (cf. van Witteloostuijn & van Wegberg, 2006). In more general terms, this propensity of perceived opportunity might support notions of *seken* (Kurihara, 2006), discussed in chapter four. Such intentions might be generalised to the level of national cultures, such as social desirability and utility as in the 'community of fate' (*unmei kyodotai*) concept traditionally applied to HRM in respect of trust in large organisations in Japan (cf. Koike, 1988; Debroux, 2003a). As highlighted above, Drucker (1990) explains how such altruism or selfless commitment is one of the key distinguishing values

expressed by employees working in voluntary sector organisations. Across cultures and sub-cultures, the submission to less than humane or altruistic trust regimes might be explained by reference to an individual's fear of social exclusion being perceived as more potent than their expectation of reward. The rational causality of exchange theories appears excessively challenged by such (arguably) irrational individual and collective behavioural choices (cf. Adorno et al, 1950).

Theoretical limitations

Against this background Conway and Briner (2007) question whether a strict reliance on social exchange theories is sufficient to capture the 'paradoxical' complexity of trust as a content feature of the contract. To illustrate:

- *If the reciprocity norm holds, we would expect an increase in long-term commitments and trust by the organization to be followed by a similar shift in the type of promises made by the employee (Conway & Briner, 2007:57).*

The authors explain how existing empirical research linking trust in the psychological contract has failed to establish that the reciprocity norm does indeed 'hold' in anything other than conceptual terms. Consequently, the apparent lack of predictive power generated by exchange theories in such contexts remains, and this regardless of whether researchers apply cross-sectional attitude surveys (cf. Rousseau, 1990) or conduct longitudinally oriented surveys designed to elicit employee (trustor) predictions of employer (trustee) promise fulfilment (cf. Conway, 1999; Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler, 2000).

Looking again at the established three-box conceptualisation of the contract in *Figure 1*, there is currently too little empirical evidence to confirm a causal and incremental increase in value from the 'cause' to the 'consequences' box on account of employee behaviours and attitudes informing the 'contents' box with 'trust' located explicitly at its core. Testing these apparent limitations the psychological contract as a theoretical construct gives the initial focus for discussion in Part Three.

2.6 Working with trust theory

In addition to guiding and locating a new research project within a previously mapped terrain of research, the process of reviewing research literature should add some immediate value to the researcher's experience and understanding of social reality (cf. Arber, 1993). By their kaleidoscopic nature (cf. O'Brien, 1993) theories appear to compete as they shed light and colour on the myriad complex aspects of social experience. The focus for discussion now moves towards a theoretical perspective developed specifically to describe, explain and predict people's trusting attitudes and behaviours.

Assuming 'trust' to be a phenomenon that might be communicated and observed in expressions of human behaviour, Yamagishi (2005) identifies the following three phases of an individual's decision to trust:

- *Trustfulness* - expressing a person's general propensity or disposition to trust - or, perhaps, to distrust
- *Perceptions of trustworthiness* - expressing a person's consideration of whether a specified person or thing can or should be trusted: i.e. is 'worthy of trust'
- *Act of trust* - or the apparent modification of a person's behaviour that might indicate a decision to express trustfulness and translate into action the perception that another person or thing is trustworthy.

This three-stage theoretical construct is attractive in that it appears to be informed by studies of human communication such as the 'inner speech' model proposed by developmental psychologists such as Vygotsky (1987). Here, speech (the externalised act) can be traced back to (socialised) 'inner speech' prompted by moving thoughts and images (perception) and ultimately back to an initial motivation to communicate a response to some perception or prediction of basic, social or aspirational need (cf. Maslow, 1954).

The Yamagishi (2005) theory connects with established positivist and interpretivist traditions in social scientific research in that it assumes the calculative nature of risk and its origins in human perceptions and experiences of uncertainty (cf. Zinn, 2007). Reconnecting with the 'human nature'

assumptions posited by Hume and subsequently Baier it assumes that people inherit a natural propensity or need to trust (cf. Erikson, 1969). Echoing Hardin (2002) and (by implication) Confucian philosophy, trust is 'learned' and through social interaction transmitted within and across generations: the more modern notion of growing up and living in a 'risk society' emerges (Beck, 2005; Giddens, 2006). Against this epistemological background the Yamagishi theory sheds light on how and why people choose to trust. It pre-empts the Nooteboom (2006) view on the 'forms, sources and processes of trust' in that it presents trust as a differentiated or complex phenomenon and human trusting behaviour as a process shifting 'between action, experience and change': accordingly, its three-stage structure runs from a 'state of mind' (cf. Rousseau et al, 1998) to 'a type of action' (O'Brien, 1993:10).

Defining key terms and processes

Applying the Yamagishi (2005) terminology, 'trustworthiness' can be understood as an attribute that one person offers to another person or a thing. According to Hardin (1993, 2002) being 'trustworthy' is an attribute that someone might also apply reflexively to him-/herself: echoing both Sun Tzu and Machiavelli, it is a public perception that political and business leaders might seek to 'manage' – even manipulate – tactically in order (for example) to promote collective (e.g. team) performance (cf. Dirks, 2006). Indeed, in respect to its relevance towards explaining and (potentially) predicting 'acts of trust' to observable acts of trust, Yamagishi (2005) suggests the process of *perceiving trustworthiness* might be synonymous with 'trust' itself in people's general experience of social reality. Correspondingly, and emphasising the human agency role of trustor, Jones (1996) defines 'trustworthiness' as:

- *A process of 'fulfilling the expectations of the trustor, in so far as (these expectations) are appropriate and welcome (1996:4)*

The 'welcome' reference highlights the affective element in this decision, as prompted by the 'vulnerability condition' for trusting decisions generally. In this

sense, 'trustworthiness' emerges from a process of trustor attribution towards a trustee. The emphasis Jones gives to 'expectation' connects with the more dynamic image of a 'congruency of expectation' developed by Beckert (2006:237) in respect of highlighting the role attributable to trust in the structuring of global markets. By extension, this emphasis on expectation connects with the 'cause' elements in *Figure 1*. This latter connection highlights how at least two perspectives on trustworthiness obtain: e.g. the employee as opposed to the employer. To illustrate, Hardin (2002) emphasises how trustworthiness becomes relevant as (would-be) trustees attempt to appeal to perceived (intended) trustor expectations. Asserting a different research emphasis, Lewis and Weigert (1985) along with McAllister (1995) emphasise a would-be trustor's quest to seek out trustworthiness in order to manage uncertainty. However, and given the imprecision and idiosyncrasy of human perception (explained below), both trustors and trustees can be mistaken in their respective attributions of trustworthiness: echoing Drucker (1990), it might be neither merited nor reciprocated. The value judgements suggested by references to 'appropriate' and 'welcome' in the Jones (1996) definition re-affirm the importance of context in giving meaning to trustor expectations - an exploration developed further in chapter three.

Another approach towards defining 'trustworthiness' is to emphasise its root meaning in 'trust'. Indeed, Flores and Solomon (1997) claim that trust and trustworthiness are 'two sides of the same coin', maintaining (1997:53) that:

- *Trustworthiness (perhaps like all virtues) means nothing in isolation, that is without trust, without anyone who cares or who is affected or who is trusting. Trustworthiness, in other words, is not a 'brute fact', but an interpretation, or, if you prefer, social fact, dependent on collective acceptance.*

This invocation of 'virtues' connects with the Confucian view of human virtue, as highlighted at the top of this chapter and in subsequent discussion linking trust and ethical behaviour. As suggested already, the reference to 'social acceptance' connects again with processes of socialisation and the type of congruence of expectation (i.e. social and moral conformity) alluded to by Jones (1996). The

question arises again as to whether people's general preferences and prejudices in terms of attribution and thus in terms of perceiving trustworthiness are culture- and / or situation-specific. Tan et al (2007) address this question both conceptually and empirically in a paper reviewed in chapter four.

Meanwhile Flores and Solomon (1997) apply similar conditions for perceptions of people or things adjudged by 'collective acceptance' to be *untrustworthy*. Applied to the three-phase Yamagishi (2005) model this summative perception of relative untrustworthiness evolves formatively, beginning with a trustor's general propensity towards *distrust* (cf. McKnight & Chervany, 2006) upon which perceptions of relative untrustworthiness are formed that, in turn, culminate in an 'act' that signals (intentionally or otherwise) *distrust* as opposed to *trust*. The boundary between the two choices / concepts remain unclear, but is unlikely to suggest polar either / or opposites (cf. Kramer, 1999). In contrast, a case is growing for applying a 'both / and' conceptualisation. Research into e-commerce and, for example, globally conducted 'customer-to-customer' (C2C) exchanges highlights how trustors might trust a person and yet distrust a system or product, or *vice-versa* (cf. Xiao & Benbasat, 2003, 2007; Giddens, 2006). In order to elicit and explain such trusting attitudes and behaviours it appears (echoing Jones' term) 'appropriate' for researchers to adopt an empirical and longitudinal approach towards involving actors in explanation of how and why they choose to trust in this discriminatory way. This might include inviting them to validate the data generated – a research opportunity that McAllister (1995) admitted he had missed by relying only on cross-sectional surveys; however, a research opportunity exploited in this current study.

2.7 Attribution and perception

Like historical analysis empirical research works primarily with human powers of perception together with processes of social and psychological attribution (Hogg & Vaughan, 2002). It accepts that senses such as sight, hearing and (not least) 'intuition' are imperfect in their support of cognitive processes such as meta-representation – one basis for the criticism levelled by Hardin (1992)

towards Annette Baier's 'moral community' concept. Empirical research works towards achieving findings that might be accepted as valid rather than as claims of absolute truth (Barnett, 1997; Robson, 2002). Consequently, research data generated by observing how people appear to express trusting attitudes and behaviours are subjected to various techniques of error and probability analysis.

Attribution

According to Badshah attribution theory describes, explains and predicts 'how perceivers explain human behaviours by inferring the causes of those behaviours' (2007:205). Echoing Luhmann (1988), the content of the attribution process draw inevitably on what is familiar. The influence of Comte's social enquiry method is evident here: the researcher observes a 'consequence' of human action and seeks to identify the cause, testing assumptions about what might link or mediate between cause and consequence. As the 'cause' is no longer present the researcher needs to infer or attribute mediating explanations, ideally supporting these explanations with convincing evidence: *observer, non imager*. This approach works also for managers using *Figure 1*. They assess employee performance ('consequence') and look for a 'cause': their HRM policies and practices? They can then attempt to attribute meaning to 'trust' as a mediating ('content') factor. In this current study the process of attribution is by design allocated to the international employees / research respondents involved.

Theories of social attribution are established in empirical trust research (cf. Lewicki & Bunker, 1996; Dirks, 2006). They help explain how people seek to justify the causes and (likely) consequences of their own and other people's behaviour (cf. Hogg & Vaughan, 2002). This can occur on a grand scale. For example, Hofstede (1980) attributes behaviours explained in reference to distinct sets of values and beliefs to national populations, thereby constructing notions of 'national' cultures. Reference to cohering 'in-group' cultures might support convergence of attribution, a convergence that moves beyond 'mere' assumption or inference when people attempt to communicate with each other (Adler, 2007). All the time, each interlocutor's powers of perception will be

running like a background virus scan programme on a computer. Each will be selecting and organising information from the environment, and evaluating it according (for example) to whether it appears benevolent or malign, whether their immediate interlocutor appears more or less trustworthy (cf. Gambetta & Hamill, 2005) - or 'strange' as in French *étranger* or 'foreigner' (cf. Blackman, 1997). The survey questionnaire (Q1 - available as *Appendix I*) is designed to elicit each respondent's attribution of trustworthiness in response to prompts such as:

- *I tend to trust people who talk like me*

Based on the discussion thus far, this item that might be formulated more precisely as 'I tend to attribute trustworthiness to people who talk in a similar manner to myself, who speak a similar dialect'.

Perception

As previously mentioned, processes of attribution and perception are shaped by socialisation and thus to a degree of normative and perhaps predictable expression (cf. Rosenberg, 1992). As illustrated above, human perception appears to initiate the attribution process: indeed, Badshah (*cited above*) identifies people who attribute explicitly as 'perceivers'. Reference to 'perception' or 'perceived' occurs frequently across the trust literature, but seldom are these key terms defined or explained. Rather like the 'zero definitions' of trust highlighted in chapter one, researchers appear to assume that we all share similar understandings of what 'perception' means, in theory and in practice.

To illustrate, the Yamagishi (2005) model places 'perceptions of trustworthiness' centrally in its design, much as 'trust' appears in *Figure 1*. Re-invoking Comte, a researcher observes what s/he defines as an 'act of trust'; the researcher seeks explanation in the 'trustfulness' or 'trusting stance' (McKnight & Chervany, 2006) of the actor concerned; the researcher infers - or elicits - what 'perceptions of trustworthiness' moved the trustor to trust the trustee. In general terms perception is a process that describes how human beings and other living

organisms detect and interpret information that reaches them through sensory receptors of sight, hearing, smell, touch and intuition (Collins, 2006:1206). The process thus combines cognition, calculation and feeling in both physical and psychological terms, comprising perceptual sensations that proceed from a human biological base (Gleitman, 1981). Thus, perception as a sense-making process is both situation-specific and sensor-specific: the situational determination for human interaction highlighted by Kurihara (2006). To illustrate, dogs might rely up to eighty per cent on smell to make sense of a situation; human communication relies up to seventy-five per cent on non-verbal signals (Crystal, 1987; Jandt, 2010). Human beings tend to be efficient at making sense of situations by referring to context, as defined, for example, by their meta-representational capacities: they look beyond the immediately apparent (Sperber, 1995). According to Wilson (2000), these meta-representational capacities are unique to human perception, separating people from animals. According to Qutb (1996) it is these capacities that enable human beings to escape the containment defined by their 'sensory organs' and seek communication with – and trust in – divine intention and thereby glimpse the Hereafter, as in dreams and prayer. So why is it that trust researchers generally appear reluctant to make this complexity explicit in their research designs? Does it present a threat to the reliability of their research designs: e.g. the survey questionnaires they use?

As highlighted above, Hume and then Baier (1986) identify a propensity to compare and then discriminate on ethical grounds as an essential feature of human nature. Human powers of perception enable us to compare across real and imaginary contexts and take account of multiple perceptions of one or several contexts: a process of met-representation not yet discovered in animals (Wilson, 2000). As such, human perception is not limited by time and place – an insight that adds weight to the case for supplementing cross-sectional survey with more open-ended elicitations of data. One approach towards this objective is to invite respondents first to make their perceived comparisons explicit then to share and analyse them in the form of a 'scenario analysis' guided by questions such as 'why?', 'why not?', and 'what if?'. For example, and

paraphrasing from Simmel (2001a), one conceptual approach might involve inviting respondents to imagine and compare i) sitting down to a meal with family and friends and ii) accepting food from a stranger on the street whose garments suggest membership of a religious cult: in fact, the 'consequence' for the perceiver of feeling sated might be similar; by perception, however? Deeper investigation might reveal 'trusting' as a dependency experience prompted by fear of social exclusion or other punishment (cf. Foucault, 1977): so-called 'peer pressure'. It might prompt further research into how individuals perceive opportunities to conform behaviourally while expressing individualistic tendencies in domains perceived as more and in less public (cf. Simmel, 2001c): on the internet, perhaps? Assuming no threat to individual vulnerability is perceived 'trust' appears to sit comfortably with power and authority: people might willingly acquiesce in order that social stability and individual predictability might reign – the scenario imagined by Thomas Hobbes. Against this background, working with 'what if?' scenarios elicits non-routine perceptions, highlights what 'routine' actually means, and supports processes of comparative and critical analysis (Western, 2008) – a line of empirically based analysis developed in Part Two.

Learning potential

Sperber (1995) offers an imagined scenario so vivid that it works as a vehicle for promoting learning and critical thinking in courses of cross-cultural management (cf. Jackson, 2007a). The scenario sees a mute 'Jill' appearing to offer berries she has just picked to a mute 'Jack' – an analogy to the 'Adam and Eve' story is immediately apparent. Whether these two are strangers to each other is information exclusive to the researcher who conceived them: the researcher maintains a 'God-like' control of the 'mutual-knowledge condition' (cf. Poundstone, 1992). In respect of Jack's response Sperber posits bluntly: 'If he trusts Jill, he will believe her; if he doesn't, he won't' (1995:197). With the removal of language (apart from non-verbal communication) the scenario becomes relatively 'culture-free' (cf. Lewis, 1996) and thereby not immediately attributable to any national cultural context (cf. Heidhues, 2001). Instead the

names and biological gender of the two protagonists are accentuated (cf. Jandt, 2010). Invoking Yamagishi (2005), on this basis the relative trusting stances, perceptions and consequential acts of the two actors can be explored. For example, in answer to questions such as:

- *What if they are complete strangers to each other?*
- *What if they are communicating via a videoconference link?*
- *What if they are communicating with each other via a videoconference link and Jill is wearing a burqa?*
- *What if they share the same time and space and Jill is wearing a uniform and a gun suggesting she can force Jack to eat the berries regardless of his preferred response?*

It is worth noting here that my experience of working with this type of scenario has frequently occurred in London where a nagging 'post 9/11' experience of urban living persists. After the July 2005 bombings a London Transport security notice invited passengers to 'trust your senses, not your neighbours'. This statement in a 'trust your own eyes and ears' campaign appears designed to connect with the inherent vulnerability that appears to underpin - or even *cause* - human acts of trust, or distrust. As an authoritative expression of binary either / or logic such bureaucratic and institutionalised statements appear designed to lead people towards a belief that 'your senses are reliable, your neighbours are not' (Parkins, 2009:1). Exploiting a loss of routine urban sensibility, it encourages commuters to re-assess their perception of 'normal' and thus impacts explicitly on people's socialised perceptions of trustworthiness. Parkins (2009:1) contextualises thus:

- *What we may know of our neighbours through the more public proximities of urban everyday life is pitted against the private, interior knowledge provided by our senses: the look that seems hostile, or the infringement of personal space that causes our heart rate to accelerate with anxiety, apparently warrants reporting to the authorities rather than being dismissed as just another uneasy sensory impression that is part of the fabric of urban experience.*

The invocation here of 'urban everyday life' has particular resonance today given that for the first time in human history most of the world's population lives in

urban rather than in rural areas (UN, 2010): a modern day Plato or Hobbes would need to persuade a very differently populated and diverse audience. For the invocation of 'public proximities' and notions of 'personal space' (above) connect directly with emerging themes in trust research such as communicating and doing business virtually with strangers, working in 'global virtual' teams (Lee-Kelley, 2006, 2008), and managing the emerging expectations among international employees of a re-aligned 'work-life balance' (cf. Briscoe et al, 2009).

For now, professional experience confirms that even working with such raw 'Jack and Jill' scenarios can help develop a critical understanding of what Schoorman et al term a 'basic and ubiquitous construct' (2007:344): i.e. *trust*. It serves to bridge from conceptualisations of human trusting attitudes and behaviours towards explorations of these in contexts for empirical research. Paraphrasing from Confucius (*Analects* 12:22): 'we are not born humane, we must learn to become so'.

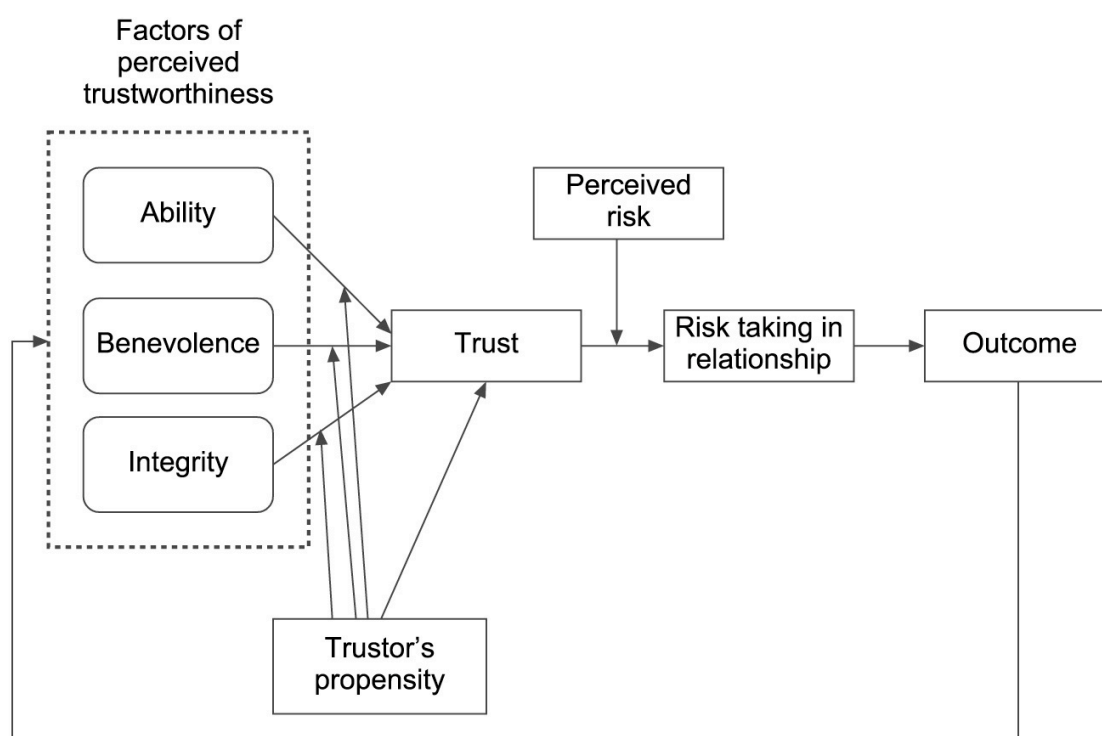
2.8 Research implications

As explained in chapter one, a tried and tested approach towards researching something as complex and elusive as trust is to locate or 'anchor' the concept within an established theoretical framework. For the purposes of this current study this function is allocated to established conceptualisations of the psychological contract, as represented in *Figure 1*. A survey of trust research uncovers similar integrative models and, in order to develop a richer appreciation of *Figure 1*, including its relative strengths and weaknesses, it is as well to review prominent examples from the field of specialist trust research.

A primary objective of conceptual trust research should be to work both within and across disciplinary perspectives in order to communicate to a wider and cross-disciplinary audience something meaningful, credible and authentic about the causes, nature and consequences of human trusting behaviour: i.e. the type of endeavour undertaken by Denise Rousseau and her colleagues in working

towards a unifying cross-disciplinary definition of 'trust' (Rousseau et al, 1998). One established and widely applied model for attempting to describe how and why people perceive trustworthiness in business transactions and other contexts for professional activity is the so-called 'ABI' model. Developed by Roger Mayer and colleagues (1995), and subsequently reviewed as Schoorman et al (2007), the model looks like this:

Figure 2: The ABI Model



Source: Mayer *et al.* (1995, p. 715)

As with the psychological contract depicted in *Figure 1* the ABI in its original form represented 'a model of dyadic trust in an organizational context' (Mayer et al, 1995:729). The model illustrates 'the causes, nature and effects' of human trusting behaviour (Mayer et al, 1995:709). Reading from left-to-right the cause factors highlight the 'characteristics of the trustor' (1995:714), one of which is the individual trustor's general 'propensity' to trust – what McKnight and Chervany (2006) term an individual's 'trusting disposition' and Yamagishi (2005) 'trustfulness'. This is assumed to be a relatively 'stable within-party factor that will affect the likelihood the party will trust' (Mayer et al, 1995:715) – the potential affect indicated here (as in *Figure 1*) with a connecting arrow. The

cluster of concepts top-left illustrate another 'within-party' concept: namely the extent to which an individual trustor is likely to attribute perceived qualities of 'ability', 'benevolence' and 'integrity' to a would-be trustee': i.e. the three key qualities that lend the 'ABI' model its abbreviated name. The extent to which these qualities might be attributed similarly or differently across culture-specific contexts for interpersonal cooperation is explored in chapter four.

Overall the ABI model is designed to 'understand how parties process information about each others, thereby deciding how much risk to take with those others' (Schoorman et al, 2007:348) – the emphasis given conceptually and visibly to 'perceived risk' to 'risk taking in relationship' is striking and recalls the dynamic suggested in the Yamagishi (2005) model. To illustrate: one logical reading of this model connects between 'trustor's propensity' through trust in relation 'perceptions of risk' to the action that serves to take the relationship forwards. In this sense it relates the aforementioned ABI factors to a trustor's cognitive and affective calculation of how risky it might be to trust - or *not* trust - in and develop a relationship with another party (Ring & Van de Ven, 1992). Here, and as with Luhmann (1988), an understanding of context is vital: how confident can the trustor be that, if his / her investment of trust in the trustee appears misplaced, what recourse do they have to measures that might serve to repair the situation and avoid only negative or harmful outcomes? To answer this question a researcher would need to understand the context for risk as perceived by the would-be trustor. This could be done by inference, as in the Sperber (1995) scenario. Or it could be done by eliciting these perceptions – retrospectively, perhaps – directly from the trustor(s) involved, as in the McAllister (1995) study.

For not only is the act of trusting considered risky, as posited by Lewis and Weigert (1985). Echoing Yamagishi (2005), the process of perceiving another party as more or less trustworthy is also risky, requiring the would-be trustor to relay on experience of trusting (more and less successfully) and simultaneously 'read' / decode the signals that their would-be trustee is sending them: e.g. in terms of their perceived ability / competence, benevolence, and integrity. As Mayer and his team claim, their ABI model was (in the context of trust research)

‘the first that explicitly considers both characteristics of the trustee as well as the trustor’ (1995:729). Indeed, this particular insight caused me to reflect on my own propensity and combined roles role as trustor / trustee and researcher, the outcomes of which are discussed in chapter four.

Comparing research models

More will said in subsequent chapters about the three ABI factors singly and in combination and from the perspective of other trust researchers. For now it is relevant to draw a comparison with *Figure 1*. The three-stage causality is evident also in *Figure 2*. However, of particular importance here is the feedback loop from (observed) outcomes to the input or cause factors: e.g. a trustor’s perception and (as a consequence) propensity to trust is continuously being re-assessed – in large part, intuitively as highlighted previously in this discussion. A parallel effect in relation to *Figure 1* would be that employees and employers continuously update their expectations of each other and thus the extent to which they are or appear willing to trust in each other. A further striking difference between the two models is the aforementioned salience given to perceptions ‘risk’ in *Figure 2*. From professional experience I have learned that beginning to talk to IHRM practitioners about ‘trust’ might intrigue them, but is unlikely to engage them immediately: perhaps they fear negative feedback. In contrast, beginning to talk about ‘risk’ and then about how trust might help practitioners manage this ubiquitous threat to business activity appears to be more ‘appropriate’ to them, and notably where the source of risk is presented as being international or cross-cultural in nature. Consequently, an alternative entry point towards interpreting *Figure 2* is through ‘perceived risk’, just as focussing first on ‘trust’ in is appropriate for beginning to work with *Figure 1* – an insight explored both conceptually and empirically in this current study.

Design

The ABI model is integrative in that it draws on a range of previous research to construe a model that might guide future conceptual and empirical research into

trust. To this end the authors offer a table of twenty-three sources (dated 1950 to 1993) listing the most commonly referred to 'trust antecedents' and out of which the three ABI variables were selected: i.e. on the strength of how frequently they occurred in the research findings (in English) of other scholar-practitioners (Mayer et al, 1995:718). The ABI is parsimonious in order to be 'generally applicable and (be) used across multiple disciplines' (Schoorman et al, 2007:344): hence the reduction in the number of 'factors of trustworthiness' from, for example, ten in Butler (1991) to three in the ABI. As in mathematics, one response to growing complexity is to reduce the equation or simplify the metaphor to its core and (perhaps) universally valid features (cf. Stewart, 1996:147). Here Mayer et al posit that the three ABI factors 'are important to trust, and each may vary independently of the others. (However) this statement does not imply that the three are unrelated to one another, but only that they are separable' (1995:720). As such the model supports future empirical research seeking to elicit manager / employee perceptions of the ABI attributes, singly and in combination, both in terms of what they actually experience and of what they might prefer to experience in contexts for organisation- or work-based interpersonal trust.

Application

Mayer and colleagues designed this combined separation / clustering of ABI factors on the premise that 'the importance of trust is likely to increase' as (during the 1990s) the workforce of US organisations became increasingly diverse: for, 'a diverse workforce is less able to rely on interpersonal similarity and common background and experience to contribute to mutual attraction and enhance the willingness to work together' (Mayer, et al, 1995:710). As highlighted in chapter one, the globalisation of business has advanced and workforces around the world have as a result become increasingly more diverse. Consequently, the ABI model with its emphasis on 'antecedents' to 'trust' and on to 'risk taking in relationships' has been applied subsequently and effectively in contexts for international or cross-cultural trust research. Examples include Bijlsma & Van de Bunt (2003), Tzafrir (2005), Tan et al (2007) and Müthel

(2007) – all research outputs reviewed subsequently in this current study. This indicates something of the rigour and general validity of the model (Schoorman et al, 2007). However, parsimony has its own risks: Schoorman et al (2007) recognise that the original cross-sectional survey foregrounded uniformly positive assumptions: little space was allowed for trustor expressions of *distrust* – a concept now salient in contexts for research into e-commerce (cf. McKnight & Choudhury, 2006).

By eliciting data from people (US American employees) who were most familiar to them, Schoorman et al (2007) admit that in devising ABI they underestimated the influence of ‘cultures’ on the ‘propensity variable’, citing for example that ‘there is evidence in the culture literature that initial trust of strangers varies across cultures’ (2007:351). They do not cite sources of this evidence. Latterly the team invoke Hofstede (1980) and the distinction he makes between *masculine* or ‘performance-oriented cultures’ that ‘tend to place a higher value on the ability variable’ and so-called *feminine* cultures that tend to be more ‘collaborative’ and therefore ‘tend to put more emphasis on the benevolence variable’ (2007:351) – a variable that in the original conceptualisation of ABI was defined as ‘the extent to which a trustee is believed to want to do good to the trustor, aside from an egocentric profit motive’ (Mayer et al, 1995:718). At face value, this definition appears broad enough to accommodate both the Baier (1983) and Hardin (1992) interpretations of non-profit seeking trust.

2.9 Summary

According to Yamagishi (2005:847):

- *Scholars as well as ordinary citizens agree that trust is an important lubricant for social relations and that trust helps build a prosperous society.*

The invocation of a ‘prosperous society’ echoes the Fukuyama (1995, 1996) argument reviewed in the introduction to this chapter. Echoing McEvily and Zaheer (2006) the discussion in this chapter confirms that trust does ‘matter’ to people, and this regardless of whether the ‘prosperity’ alluded to above should

generate benefits at the national, organisational, group or individual levels of experience and expectation.

This highly selective review of trust literature has provided a number of relevant insights together with a series of open questions as to what meanings might be attributed to trust by international employees. The assumption of human vulnerability as a basis for trusting decisions appears to be universally valid; the relative strengths (e.g. transparently patterned quantitative data) and limitations (e.g. weak basis upon which to interpret causality) of using cross-sectional surveys in empirical research have been highlighted, and confirmed much of what was learnt in relation to the Robinson (1996) and Atkinson (2007) studies. Similarly, contextualising human trusting attitudes and behaviours by reference to perceived risk appears to be a valid approach; where possible, encouraging them to make their perceptions explicit and, if possible, recognise learning opportunities from doing so. A further significant insight has been the emphasis given conceptually to trust as a process: i.e. of perceiving trustworthiness in others and (potentially) reflexively in oneself. These and related insights inform the review of psychological contract research presented in chapter three.

Chapter 3: A review of research into the psychological contract

Trust is itself a term for a clustering of perceptions

(White, 1992: 174)

3.0 Introduction

The purpose the discussion in this chapter is to explore meanings attributed by HRM scholars and practitioners to 'trust' generally and to 'trust in the psychological contract' specifically. The review of trust literature in chapter two served to anchor the concept conceptually: the focus now is on anchoring trust spatially within established conceptualisations of the psychological contract. Echoing Rousseau (1989, 1990, 2010) the emphasis here is on exploring individual employee perspectives on the contract – an emphasis developed empirically in subsequent chapters.

3.1 Focussing on trust

As stated in chapter one the 'psychological contract' represents a social-psychological construct designed by HRM scholars to describe, explain and predict how individual employees might choose to interpret their experiences and expectations of the employment relationship. Over time it has accrued the status as a theoretical construct worthy of ongoing critical enquiry (Conway & Briner, 2007). The contract describes perceptual boundaries beyond and between the boundaries set by any formalised legal document or employment contract (cf. Rousseau, 1995). As a theory it supports both hypothetical and empirical investigations of how and where employment relationships might prosper and become routine (cf. Atkinson, 2007). It also supports hypothetical and empirical investigations of how such relationships might fail, notably in situations and contexts where 'trust' appears by one or other party to have been 'breached' or 'lost' (cf. Robinson, 1995, 1996).

Intangibility

The 'three-box' depiction of the psychological contract introduced in chapter one (*Figure 1*) was presented both as a pattern of rational discourse common to social scientific enquiry and as a management model that should help simplify a complex and vital aspect of HRM life. Unlike a formal written contract of employment that an employee might take to hand, the psychological contract exists intangibly as a management model or metaphor; or, paraphrasing from White (1992), as a 'clustering of perceptions' anchored by a intention to act in pursuit of individually relevant objectives such as the affirmation of a situated social identity as either employer or employee (cf. Rousseau & McLean Parks, 1993). As illustrated in chapter two, how people individually and collectively choose to trust and perceive others as more or less trustworthy – both immediately and over time – expresses something of their propensity to trust and thereby of their personality and / or identity (cf. Schoorman et al, 2007). It expresses something of how they perceive their own role and performance in comparison to other employees (cf. McAllister, 1995). The clustering and discriminating effect of human perception is ordered by reference to a situated cognition (cf. Kramer, 2006): in *Figure 1* notions of 'trust', 'fairness' and the perceived promise or 'delivery' of some 'deal' are assumed to interact within a 'content' box and, according to logic of the model, to do this both semantically and conceptually. Paraphrasing from White (1992), focusing specifically on trust appears to render it a perceptible 'cluster' within a 'cluster of perceptions'.

As illustrated in chapter one the discourse structure of *Figure 1* suggests there is movement within and across the model: eye movement, at least. Within the cluster trust might appear to elide with 'fairness' (somehow hierarchically) and with a sense of 'satisfaction' somehow linearly and / or incrementally. Some attention was given in previous chapters as to what these concepts might mean individually and connectedly from the perspective of individual employees. However, one look at the model is enough to suggest how complex this cluster is and how the interpretation of each concept – singly and in combination – is subject to the fluid expectations that both employer and employee develop and

exchange during various stages of their relationship (cf. Rousseau, 1990; Morrison & Robinson, 1997).

Semantic discord

In chapter one the discourse elements of the contract were highlighted: i.e. the 'schemata' of which trust is but one 'schema' (Rousseau, 2001). As such, 'trust' as discrete content element is rendered memorable and – as contextualised within the model - might provide 'a basis for prediction' (Widdowson, 1983:34). Commentators closer to HRM practice interpret the contract as a 'metaphor' (Bratton & Gold, 2007) – a socio-cultural construct that Clifford Geertz defines as 'the power whereby language, even with a small vocabulary, manages to embrace a multi-million thing' (1973:210). Invoking metaphors in this way says something about the culture of scholar-practitioners in management – a culture it is necessary to engage with and without if the perspective of employees is to be identified and (where relevant) differentiated from it. For, invoking metaphors in this general way serves to unsettle any current and perhaps settled perspectives on 'trust in the psychological contract'. To illustrate, prominent trust scholars variously describe trust as a lever or 'device' (Luhmann, 1979), a 'glue' (Govier, 1997), or 'lubricant' (Bachmann, 2001) that facilitates the formation and development of relationships between employers and employees. The semantic contradictions here are apparent, or perhaps they cohere and say something about the inherent complexity of trust. The metaphors vary depending on which scholarly perspective is being emphasised; which audience is being addressed. Here it is instructive to note how Geertz suggests that 'the power of metaphor derives precisely from the interplay between the discordant meanings it symbolically coerces into a unitary conceptual framework' (1973:211). Consequently, one primary objective and thus design feature adopted for this current study is to allow space and time for research respondents to attribute their own metaphorical attributions to trust. In anticipation here it is as well to recognise how one employee's perception of *trustworthiness* might equate to another's perception of *fairness*; or, indeed, of *un-trustworthiness*. As Yamagishi (2005) posits, perception holds the key to

understanding how and why people choose to trust; and, how subsequently, researchers attribute meaning to how and why people trust.

3.2 A brief history of psychological contract research

Unlike research into trust the history of psychological contract research is relatively short, given that origins of the term 'psychological contract' can be found in studies of industrial and organisational psychology in the North American manufacturing sector. For example, Argyris (1960:97) described the contract as a 'hypothesized relationship' that 'evolved' between employees and 'their foremen'. His hypotheses predicted how these relationships might develop, and why. Adopting an informed observer perspective Levinson and colleagues suggested that the contract described something about which the parties involved might be only 'dimly aware' but which 'nonetheless' shaped the course of their relationship (Levinson et al, 1962:21). The metaphorical salience of the contract became thus reinforced at an early stage in its development.

The contract thereafter appeared to lose its power as a unifying concept in HRM research until Denise Rousseau's seminal paper of 1989. Its appearance coincided with what subsequently became recognised as a shift in paradigm from traditional the bureaucratically interpreted and 'job-oriented' *personnel* management to the more strategically and 'people-oriented' *human resource* management or HRM (cf. Guest, 1989). Prior to this there had been Industrial Relations research on, for example, the exchange basis upon which employees might contribute to the organisation in relation to how they perceived the current and future value of the inducements offered to them by their employer (March & Simon, 1958). The focus for concern here is the organisation rather than individual employees *per se*. The focus for explaining the dynamic of their relationship is an exchange of work for reward, as in the theories of social and economic exchange highlighted in chapter two: i.e. the type of formal or informal 'deal' that might be deemed common to to all employment relationships (Edwards, 2003; Ackers, 2005).

In contrast, the aforementioned Argyris (1960) study proved to be the first explicitly to apply the concept as a 'psychological work contract' towards understanding the *needs* that employees harboured – usually tacitly, as employers seldom asked them – for personal and professional growth and (not least) respect for the contribution they made. It was Schein (1965) who crystallised the work of Argyris (1960) and subsequently Levinson et al (1962) into a unified and explicit conceptualisation of a 'psychological contract' that should accommodate the perspectives of both employers and employees. Pre-empting the focus common to HRM research on the relationships negotiated by line-managers and subordinates Schein proposed that a 'match' existed between organisational structures and cultures and the type of relationships that line-managers and other managers with HRM responsibility maintained. This 'matching' hypothesis was tested empirically by Kotter (1973) who proposed that i) the matching needed to be established at the level of the dyadic relationship rather than at the level of individual employees and that ii) the matching exercise should focus on a matching employee / employer expectations, assuming that these could and would be made explicit and negotiable. In this sense the organisation becomes re-defined as a marketplace for the exchange of contribution and reward (cf. Varey, 2000) and thus for the type of 'congruence of expectations' that Beckert (2006) uses to describe markets where trust play an active role.

A seminal contribution

The aforementioned Rousseau (1989) paper shifted the terrain of psychological contract research with four enduring contributions. Firstly, she shifted the rather legalistic emphasis on 'obligations' to one on *promises* or 'an individual's beliefs regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between that focal person another party' (1989:123). The 'focal person' in this case is the individual employee and, in emphasising one individual's *beliefs* about the employment relationship Rousseau highlights the ambiguous ways in which promises are commonly exchanged, inferred, and perceived by one or other party to be broken. Secondly, the *perceptual* and – like trust, perhaps –

potentially elusive detail of the contract is highlighted in her view that it exists purely 'in the eye of the beholder' (1989:123). This intervention reinforced the need (for the sake of research validity) to consider diverse perspectives on the contract when, for whatever reason, the HRM researcher or practitioner might choose to discern and emphasise its situation-specific salience. For, by highlighting individual beliefs Rousseau is reminding us of the need to understand context as perceived by the *believer / perceiver*. As in discussion of the ABI model (*Figure 2*) it is the individual trustor's perception and calculation of the *risks* involved in trusting at any one time or place that empirical trust researchers are challenged to elicit.

A third advance achieved by Rousseau (1989) came in respect of how psychological contracts arose the prominence. According to Argyris (1960) primary drivers here include the needs that employees bring to their work: a perspective informed, for example, by reference to Maslow's (1954) theory of human beings motivated by a variety of needs ranging from basic physiological needs for survival, to social needs for belonging and, having satisfied these, a more individualised stretching for 'self actualisation'. In what proved to be a major crossover point between trust and psychological contract research Rousseau (1989) posited that contracts are formed essentially through *individual perception* of need fulfilment: on the one side the perception of the employer's behaviour towards the employee, and on the other side what the employer or its agent perceives to be the employee's behaviour – or response to being managed as a human resource. As emphasised in chapter two, perception is a powerful and complex process; as emphasised here and in subsequent chapters, it is essentially *processual* and highly situation- / context-specific.

Fourthly Rousseau looked beyond the concern demonstrated by Schein (1965) and Kotter (1973) for exploring how employee and employer expectations might be 'matched'. Rousseau posited that, in the individual employee perception, *breach* or violation were *the norm*, and that routine negotiations of the contract were largely insignificant – a rather gloomy though critically electric view that inspired the Robinson (1995) study discussed in chapter one. Again some parallel with mainstream trust research is evident here, as where Luhmann

(1988) suggests that 'contextual confidence' is the norm in everyday life and work, while questions of 'trust' and another person's relative trustworthiness become salient where *confidence* (for whatever reason) wanes – an insight explored in more detail in chapter four.

Employees under pressure

Considerable scholarly HRM attention turned again towards investigating what the contract might mean in the early 1990s, notably in the USA and Western Europe. This arose in response to the social, cultural, economic and technological global restructuring highlighted by Ohmae (2001) – a decade-long process that Fukuyama (2000) identified subsequently as a process of 'great disruption'. Internationally, this was also the period when the Japanese economy began to fall into what became commonly styled 'a lost decade' (cf. Porter et al, 2000) – an extended period of economic and technological re-adjustment that had consequences in Europe and the USA as locations for extensive Japanese foreign direct investment (FDI). To illustrate, Japanese FDI to the UK increased fivefold between 1987 and 1996, reaching US\$ 9.79 billion by 1998; in 1997 around 2.5 per cent of all British employees in manufacturing worked for Japanese owned organisations. By the end of the 1990s, and despite continued FDI, the number of employees employed in the UK shrank as production moved to the emerging economies of Eastern Europe (Rudlin, 2002:243). Against the background of these and similar economic trends it is illuminating that to recognise how David Guest and Neil Conway (2002b) - in parallel to the study that generated *Figure 1* - were engaged in projects investigating 'pressure at work' for the London-based *Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development* (CIPD).

It is an HRM truism that employees seldom look at their formal (written) contract of employment after signing and the period of employment has commenced: that is, until some 'critical incident' is perceived to arise (cf. Robinson, 1996; Atkinson, 2007). Thoughts might then turn to quitting the organisation, checking periods of notice and other conditions, rights and / or obligations. It is at this point that employees might recognise the 'spaces

between the lines' (including so-called 'loopholes') that exist in all contracts; indeed, in all legal documents. Within and across these spaces employees might experience their first formal encounter with the more informal and implicit 'psychological contract'; notably in respect of what promises might have been made and left unfulfilled; what obligations might have been neglected (cf. Rousseau, 1995). In reality, and as Guest and Conway (2002) advised the employers and managers they worked with, the crisis re-adjustment scenario is the exception: of more strategic relevance is understanding how employment environments of pressure and potential conflict gradually arise; and how, by referring to research-based models such as the psychological contract, such conflicts might be avoided or, if deemed unavoidable, then at least managed effectively.

3.3 A model PhD thesis

In a remarkable PhD thesis for the University of London Conway (1999) combines a cross-sectional employee attitude survey with data from employee diaries ($n = 361$: average response rate = 54%). The study focuses on routine processes of negotiating the employment relationship rather than highlighting the more dramatic 'violations' or 'breaches' (cf. Robinson, 1996) that still inform the bulk of psychological contract research (Conway & Briner, 2007). By eliciting empirical data from two types of employee (part-time and full-time), Conway (1999) relies on both cross-sectional surveys and on longitudinal accounts (diaries) self-penned by the respondents at their place of work. Conway attempts to support empirical measures of 'job satisfaction' - a key outcome or 'consequence' identified in the three-box model of the contract. His coding of data draws on theoretical scales developed by leading organisational psychologists in the development of psychological contract theory: notably, Robinson (1995, 1996), Robinson and Rousseau (1994) and Rousseau (1995, 1998).

Conway (1999:502) offers a two-level analysis of 'employee beliefs': one of general or collective beliefs, and one of specific or individually held beliefs. On the basis of this distinction, he generates survey items that include:

- *The organization values my contribution to its well-being*
- *The organization takes pride in my accomplishments at work*

It can be recognised already how Conway ascribes an agency role to the organisation: a metaphorical process termed 'anthropomorphising' and a common point of divergence between what researchers assume employees do (or should) perceive as their employer and what employees - individually and collectively - actually perceive the be their employer at any one time (Conway & Briner, 2007:125). Furthermore, he gives no clear guidance as to how respondents do or should interpret loaded process concepts such as 'values' (as a verb phrase) together with relatively complex collocations such as 'takes pride in'. He thus appears to assume that all his respondents are i) native-level speakers of English and ii) critically aware of how an employer 'values' their individual and collective performance. It should be remembered that these survey questions were administered diagnostically: there is little indication that the researcher opened any channels for feedback. As with all fixed-design survey questions, the data generated are thus subject to ambiguity and thus of contestable validity.

Conway's follow-up use of a longitudinal diary approach is a genuine breakthrough and one subsequently replicated by Conway and Briner (2002). In emphasising the qualitative credentials of his empirical research, Conway is frank about the need for researchers to work openly with processes of inference about, for example, how respondents make 'inferences concerning the organization's commitment to them' (1999:500). Other researcher inferences are applied in tracing or coding patterns of employee 'beliefs' in the diary testimony his sample provides. It is again interesting how Conway triangulates these individual accounts against the agency role he attributes to 'the organisation', comparing his own conceptualisation of how organisations might

'take pride' in people's work – an item that only make sense to employees if they share the researcher's anthropomorphic attribution. In truth, assigning this active role might represent little more than a scholarly convenience or (Conway & Briner, 2007:127).

The psychological contract as theory

Drawing on his comprehensive review of English language research into the psychological contract, Conway (1999:53) reaffirms that, from an empirical research perspective, the two features distinguishing the psychological contract as a general theory are:

- It captures the 'entire set of employee beliefs' about the employment relationship
- It represents an ongoing process for 'linked up' exchange between employer and employee

These conclusions echo previous empirical research (cf. Kotter, 1973; Rousseau, 1989; Rousseau & McLean Parks, 1993; Rousseau, 1995). They also support established definitions of the psychological contract as:

- *Individual beliefs, shaped by the organization, regarding terms of an exchange agreement between the individual and their organization* (Rousseau, 1995:9).
- *An employee's subjective understanding of promissory-based reciprocal exchange between him or herself and the organization* (Conway & Briner, 2007:35).

As a key research outcome Conway finds that the psychological contract offers a valid 'theoretical framework by which to explain attitudinal and behavioural differences between part-time and full-time employees' (1999:53). Furthermore, by eliciting and contrasting the experiences of both part- and full-time employees in the UK Conway makes an early contribution to studies of diversity in HRM research, thus pre-empting other empirical studies designed to explore variables such as age, gender and nationality (cf. Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998;

Rousseau & Raja, 2000; Lo & Aryee, 2003; Raja et al, 2004). A new attempt is made in this current study.

3.4 Emerging research agendas

As with the specialist trust research reviewed in chapter two, research into the psychological contract appears oriented toward generating typologies. Working within the realms of attribution and perception, Guest et al (1996) distinguish between 'positive' and 'negative' contracts. Emphasising an employer perspective, they link attributions of *positivity* to 'higher [employee] commitment to the organization'. Emphasising the employee perspective, Conway and Briner (2007:187) distinguish between so-called 'transactional contracts' and 'relational contracts'. The following table contrasts these:

Table 1: *Shifting perceptions of the psychological contract*

Psychological contract: <i>contextual features</i>	Psychological contract type: <i>transactional</i>	Psychological contract type: <i>relational</i>
Time frame	Short-term; promises bounded by time and space	Long-term; open-ended and flexibly interpreted promises
Degree of specificity	Highly specified	Loosely specified, amorphous
Resources exchanged	Tangible, having a monetary value	Intangible, likely to be socio-emotional
Explicitness of promises exchanged or inferred	Explicit	Implicit
Approach to negotiation	Likely to be explicit and require formal (e.g. written or handshake) agreement by both parties	Implicit, and likely to involve informal (unspoken?) and / or assumed agreement by both parties
Examples from HRM practice	Quantitative calculation: e.g. a specific rate of pay offered in exchange for a specific number of hours worked and / or the completion of a set number of defined tasks	Qualitative calculation: e.g. an offer of job security in exchange for an employee's promise of loyalty and commitment to the organisation / task

Source: Conway & Briner (2007:44 - *adapted*)

Conway and Briner (2007:188) explain how transactional contracts tend to emphasise the individual employee's interests and expectations in highly focussed, job-specific terms such as 'working strictly defined hours' and working to achieve 'short-term goals'. The emphasis is on an explicit exchange of benefits or goods of short-term value: e.g. cash as opposed to professional development. The transactional type of contract is contrasted with the more relational type where employees express the expectation to 'grow' in and with a particular organisation because they perceive a 'mapped out' career in their current relationship to an employer. Employees who harbour a strong belief in their own resourcefulness might favour transactional-type contracts given that their primary 'commitment' is assumed to be towards leveraging their 'time-bounded' human resource in markets external to the organisation rather than in markets defined within the current boundary of 'the organisation' (cf. Varey, 2000; Fay, 2010b). This approach towards understanding how employees might independently assess their relative market value is not covered in the Conway (1999) study, thus threatening to the validity of responses to survey items such as 'the organization values my contribution to its well-being'. Furthermore, contrasting these two types of contract implies stretching (e.g. through time) the meanings attributed to trust: e.g. should an employee choose to trust an employer 'transactionally' for the short term or 'relationally' for the long, or both, or neither? Experiences of HRM practice suggest that answers to such questions might be predicted by reference to evolving markets for employment (cf. Fay, 2010b) and the emergence of what is often loosely termed markets for 'talent' (cf. Cappelli, 2008). This question of conceptual stretch appears to be addressed only sporadically in contract research, hence the attempt made in this current study to develop an international employee perspective, challenging the current boundaries of *Figure 1* and connecting with emerging international markets for employment and individual career development.

Shifting expectations

Parallel to shifting research interpretations between 'transactional' and 'relational' contracts standard HRM textbooks continue to identify 'old' and 'new'

interpretations of the contract. To illustrate, Torrington et al (2008:445) explain how 'old' interpretations of the contract emphasise exchanges informed by employee offers of loyalty and commitment, the expectation being that employers reciprocate with offers of job security and a structured career path. One standard illustration of 'old' contracts concerns the expectations that male, management track employees in large Japanese organisations (*kaisha*) carry towards imagining a one-employer career path: the items listed under 'relational contracts' above sketch the 'old' situation fairly precisely (cf. Dore & Sako, 1983; Koike, 1988; Yoshimura & Anderson, 1997; Debroux, 2003; Jackson & Debroux, 2009). In contrast, new or emerging interpretations of the contract in Japan and elsewhere emphasise how the employee brings a commitment to continuous learning or self-development without necessarily committing long-term to one employer. In return, the employer offers a promise of enhanced employability either within the internal career markets defined by 'the organisation' or across external and perhaps global markets for employment and individual career development (cf. Jackson & Tomioka 2004; Jackson & Debroux, 2008). Recently in Japan, demographic trends towards 'individualised' and 'internationalised' career pathways among both male and female employees are being observed (cf. Watanabe, 1998; Jackson, 2006; Yuasa, 2009). As employment expectations shift perceptibly, so perceptions of uncertainty (e.g. with regard to previously assumed outcomes of contract negotiations) become more acute: assumptions of trust and trustworthiness that previously formed a distinctive foundation for Japanese HRM become unsettled (cf. Kono & Clegg, 2001; Debroux, 2003; Jackson & Tomioka, 2004). As with trust, systematic reference to a 'psychological contract' serves to reduce uncertainty, at least from the perspective of HRM practitioners and researchers (cf. De Carlo et al, 2010) – a line of analysis pursued in Part Two.

Managing trust?

This line of enquiry overall raises questions as to whether or how 'trust in the psychological contract' might be 'managed'; or, indeed, *mis*-managed. Wellin (2007) makes this potential explicit by choosing to 'view' and interpret the

contract as a 'personal deal' linked to and achieving salience by means of an exchange and negotiation of mutual expectations – the *do ut des* (Latin: *I give so that you give*) concept elaborated by Andresen and Göbel (2008). This potential for exchange defines the 'deal' contextualised by the contract (cf. Herriot & Pemberton, 1997). However, in exploring its negotiable 'value' as an essential element of the contract, Wellin makes only perfunctory – and undefined – reference to 'trust', preferring to paraphrase the concept with reference to managed processes such as 'truth-telling' and demonstrating 'open-mindedness' (2007:199).

According to Beckert (2006) a dynamic interaction of trust as process can be reinterpreted in terms of a 'congruency of expectation' (2006:237). This is what marketers attempt to achieve when making segmentation decisions in marketing communications (cf. Mühlbacher et al, 1999). Like marketers, HRM practitioners might be viewed as targeting consumers with the objective of persuading them to buy into the benefits 'promised' by selected products and services: they offer 'deals' that might be 'delivered'. Would-be 'managers of trust' can be understood to persuade intended trustors (employees) to align their expressions of culture-specific identity, social status, assumed lifestyle preferences and general behaviour to those perceived to profile the intended trustee – the employer. However, empirical research has thus far failed to explain convincingly how the psychological contract might be *managed* (Conway & Briner, 2007:177). Chapter four offers an attempt to outline international dimensions to these trends.

Managing expectations?

Perhaps a more conceptually adroit way into the 'managing trust' question is to focus on expectations and simultaneously draw on mainstream marketing research and practice: i.e. by emphasising the management of employee (*aka* 'customer') *expectations*. As a general illustration of this process Rollinson and Dundon (2007:18) list 'typical' content components of the psychological contract

in terms of the expectations that the employee might bring to the employment relationship:

Table 2: *Matching employee and employer expectations*

<i>Employee expectations</i>	<i>Employer expectations</i>
Jobs will be interesting, rewarding and satisfying	Honesty, diligence and trustworthiness
Safe working conditions	Acceptance of the organisation's core values and vision
Fair and reasonable rewards for efforts	Loyalty and dedication to the job and the organisation
Involvement in work-related decisions	Demonstrate a concern for the reputation of the organisation
Opportunities for career progression and personal development	To conform to accepted standards of behaviour
Equality of opportunity	Consideration for other employees, managers and customers

Source: Dundon (2010:187)

The theme of managing (or manipulating?) employee expectations is becoming prominent in contexts for HRM research across business sectors (cf. Nel et al, 2008). However, as a process of HRM practice and research where Machiavellian-type manipulation is at issue, it appears to connect with what Gargiulo and Ertug (2006) identify as the potential 'dark side of trust'.

Public sector contexts

Discussion around such HRM opportunities and ethical concerns pervade much contract research in contexts for public sector management (cf. Guest & Conway, 2000, 2001). This is important as PSOs remain major employers across many parts of the world; not least, as employer of immigrant employees or employees from diverse social-cultural backgrounds (Flynn, 2007). The shift appears in response to the interests and influence of key stakeholders; notably, national and regional politicians and citizens now cast in the role of 'customers' and 'clients'

(cf. Cheung & Scott, 2003). In contexts for managing individual employee performance increasing research emphasis is given to measures of efficiency and customer-orientation: in contract terms, 'the deal to be delivered' is defined increasingly by reference to interests beyond trust defined within the social and legal boundary of any one public sector organisation or PSO (cf. Tyler, 2001, 2003). As depicted in *Figure 1* the outer box boundary ('the organisation') is becoming increasingly porous and in both conceptual and practical terms to the influence and expectations of 'customers' and other key stakeholders. From an HRM perspective these expectations influence interpretations of employee 'expectations' (cause), employee perceptions of 'the delivery of the deal' (content) and performance-oriented 'consequences' such as 'motivation' and 'organisational commitment'. Public sector HR managers are being held more accountable for performance in response to these expectations – perhaps loosely referred to as 'market forces' (cf. Flynn, 2007). Concomitantly, in PSOs there appears to be a shift towards a more individualised negotiation of 'transactional' contract types (Armstrong & Murlis, 2004).

3.5 Comparing trust and loyalty

This current study connects with established streams of 'feature-oriented' contract research, where attempts are made to discern and (ideally) measure the impact of discrete contract features on employee attitudes and behaviours (cf. Guest & Conway, 2002). As in any type of relationship or contract, one key feature is 'time' (cf. *Table 1*); another less researched feature is 'trust' (cf. Robinson, 1995; Atkinson, 2007). However, it is 'loyalty' that appears more explicitly and commonly listed in the inventories of contract features (cf. Rousseau, 2001). This perhaps reflect the concern of employers (as research sponsors) about the perceived shift in employee expectations of employment generally: employers would like to know more about which employees are likely to stay loyal or 'committed' to the organisation and which are less 'reliable' in this sense (cf. De Carlo et al, 2010). The promissory and obligatory connotations associated with conceptualisations of 'loyalty' thus remain firmly established as

a major focus for contract research (Rousseau, 1990; Turnley & Feldman, 1999). Like trust, reference to loyalty offers the potential to develop cross-cultural comparisons in contract research (cf. Lo & Aryee, 2003; Si, et al, 2009) – examples of which are reviewed in chapter four.

In contexts for HRM research 'loyalty' is commonly contrasted (albeit fuzzily) to 'trust'. For example, in developing her model of trust-building in employment relationships Cruise O'Brien (2001) makes a clear distinction between trust that is earned over time and loyalty which might be 'bought' according to opportunity and purpose and, once bought, might act as a barrier to future trust building (Cruise O'Brien, 2001:41-2). By this interpretation trust as a process appears more temporally anchored while loyalty appears more situationally embedded. This balance of interpretation accords with the 'transactional' versus 'relational' contract distinction illustrated in *Table 1* and the balance between employer and employee expectations suggested in *Table 2*. However, Cruise O'Brien's emphasis on expectations of material gain for loyalty betrays an ethnocentric understanding. For example, it misses the observation that East Asian conceptualisations of 'loyalty' such as Japanese *chuu-sei* (忠誠) express a commitment 'central to the heart' (the left-hand combination of characters) rather than to the wallet.

On balance it can be said that, from an employee perspective, loyalty is subjective (Shore & Tetrick, 1991) while, from an employer perspective, loyalty is akin to commitment and thus a foundation for a particular type of employment relationship (cf. *Table 1*). Like trust, and whether (in Machiavellian terms) genuine or feigned, expressions of loyalty might have a mediating effect in situations where managers are perceived to act (unexpectedly?) incompetently or display lapses in integrity or benevolence (Lo & Aryee, 2003). From an employer perspective, one outcome of having too many 'loyal' (i.e. emotionally attached) as opposed to *competent* employees can result in organisational inefficiency: e.g. the glut of timeserving 'general managers' still employed in some Japanese *kaisha* (cf. Pucik, 2002).

3.6 Researching trust as content

Connecting with the literature review presented in chapter two it is relevant to observe how explicit reference to 'trust' in psychological contract research tends to attract meanings such as:

- A belief or personality characteristic of individual employees, apparently shaping how they are likely to perceive promises made by the employer and express their own expectations (Rousseau, 2001; Raja et al, 2004)
- A resource supporting the negotiation of the employment relationship (Herriot & Pemberton, 1997)
- (*Experienced as a loss or decrease*) a cause and consequence of perceived contract breach (Robinson, 1996)
- (*By extension to the above*) a factor in how a previously cooperative or positive relationship might be restored (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994)

Explicit reference to *distrust* parallels the above, and notably as an outcome from a perception of breach and thus - assuming iterative interpretations of the contract - as a cause of the scepticism or suspicion that an employee might bring to future negotiations of established or newly negotiated contracts (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994; Robinson, 1995, 1996).

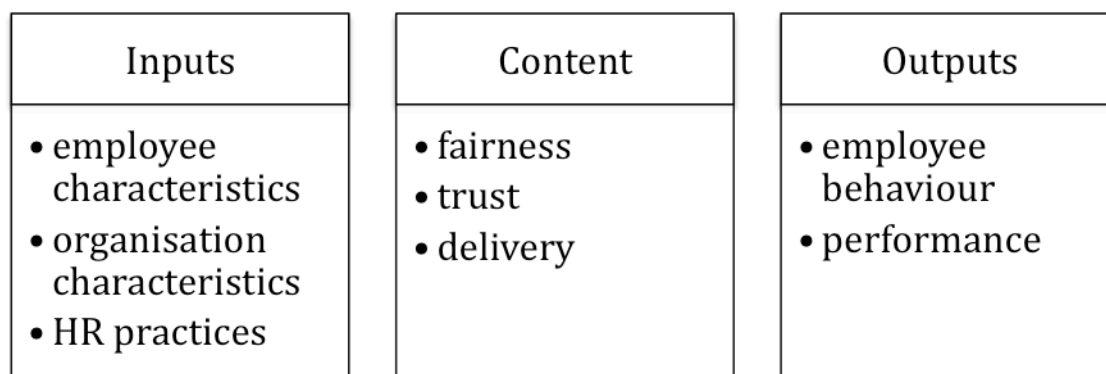
Interpreting trust as process

According to Conway and Briner, researchers 'broadly agree the psychological contract represents an unfolding dynamic process' (2007:131). Echoing Langley (1999), Conway and Briner (2007:133 - *adapted*) identify a 'process' as:

- A series of stringed events between which the timing can vary
- Involving multiple actors (*thereby*) inviting multiple levels of analysis
- Complex in that they engage other sub-processes prompted by a multiplicity of apparently unconnected events

This process interpretation of trust is supported and, indeed, suggested explicitly in *Figure 3* below - available from the *Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development* (CIPD), a UK-based community of HRM professionals.

Figure 3: *Trust as process (content)*



Source: www.cipd.co.uk, accessed 17th January 2010

The salience of 'trust' here and in *Figure 1* is clear: it occupies a central and potentially axial position. In *Figure 1* the left-to-right dynamic around and through this axis is suggested by connecting arrows, while in the CIPD version a syntactical dynamic is suggested by the 'Input-Content-Output' rubric that, in sum, represents a basic 'I > P > O' flow system. Here 'content' is interpreted as 'process' (P) linking inputs and outputs: according to Conway and Briner (2007), the bulk of psychological contract research interprets this process as a before, during and after of perceived 'breach'. Thus the 'series of stringed events' referred to above might signify trust as a virtue that stretches and accrues meaning through time – the connotation evident in the Arabic plural form of trust (*awqaf*) highlighted in chapter one. Anchoring the salience of trust in relation to perceptions of 'breach' might thus capture this plural aspect in a series of 'critical incidents' between which employee / employer perceptions of disaffection or breach might evolve (cf. Robinson, 1995; Atkinson, 2007). In

longitudinal studies, this string of critical incidents might take the form of a narrative (cf. Brislin & Yoshida, 1994). However, in the 'real world' of empirical contract research this narrative is likely to comprise more a series of mundane 'sense-making' activities and implicit 'conversations' about 'trust in the psychological contract' (cf. Shaw, 2002). Empirical researchers are thus challenged to leave space for the narratives outlining the routine and 'taken-for-grantedness' of human trusting attitudes and behaviours (cf. Möllering, 2006a).

Agency

Emphasising trust as process highlights the relationship between the 'S' and 'O' elements of the discourse pattern and, consequently, about *agency*, defined here as 'the capability, the power, to be the source and originator of acts: agents are the subjects of action' (Rapport & Overing, 2000:1) Much psychological contract research accords an agency role to 'the organisation'. To illustrate from Conway and Briner (2007:49):

- *The organisation plays a fundamental role in establishing and shaping the psychological contract and, in most cases, initiates part of the content of the psychological contract through offering jobs.*

This line of attribution appears in the Conway (1999) study in survey items such as:

- *The organization takes pride in my accomplishments at work*

One premise for this current study is that 'the organisation' (as a social, legal and economic entity) represents a shared 'sense-making' point of reference among employees. The organisation is their common employer and its existence prompts, for example, the development of 'HRM policies and practices' (*input / cause*) that all employees (via *trust*) might expect each other to commit to (*consequence / outputs*). From the individual employee perspective, the initial stages of the employment relationship are likely to be associated with a collective 'organisation', as perceived and experienced during relatively standardised processes of recruitment, selection and (not least) induction – as

stated previously, a new hire's experience of induction can be reinterpreted as an adult's re-immersion in a form of socialisation (cf. Rousseau, 1990). It is likely that less standardised and thereby more individualised contracts will emerge as employees become further inducted into the type of commitment that 'the organisation' and other employees expect. In retrospect, perhaps, individual employees begin to understand more critically that it is managers with HRM responsibilities who, in practice, 'offer jobs' and who (from an individual employee perspective) 'initiate' that part of the psychological contract highlighted here as 'trust' (cf. Herriot & Pemberton, 1997). The HRM practitioners at issue here tend to be employees such as line-managers and team leaders whose operational choices and interventions most vividly make and shape the contracts perceived, experienced, and negotiated by individual employees.

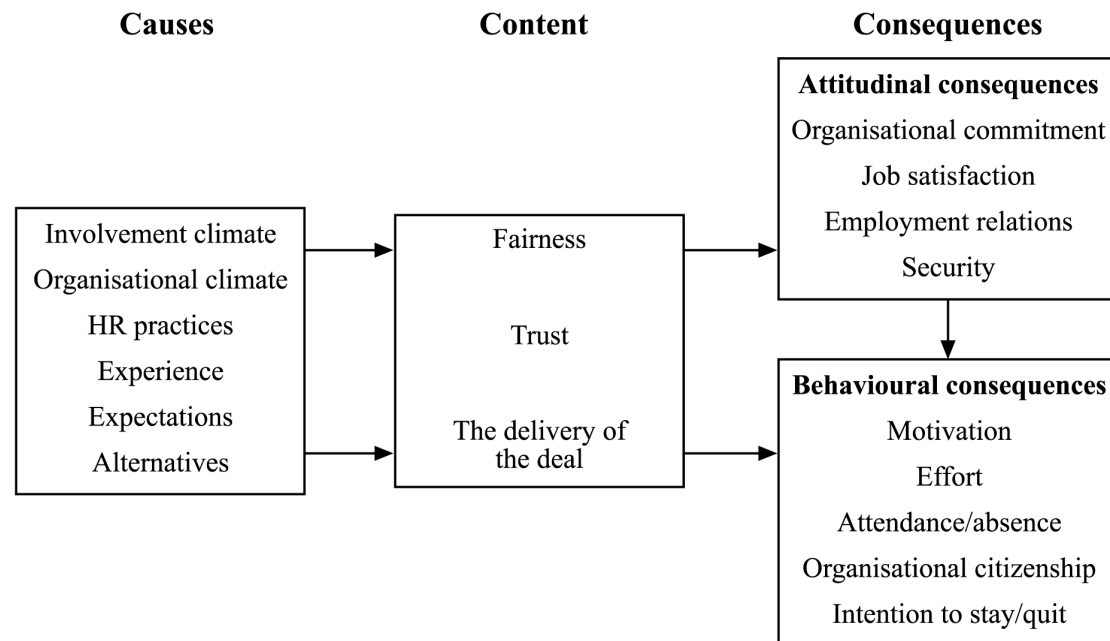
3.7 Interpreting trust as output

The discussion thus far has emphasised 'trust' as an element of contract 'content'. However, and with a view towards informing future HRM performance (cf. Huselid et al, 1997), there is a case for exploring whether 'trust' might also be interpreted as a 'consequence' or output of the contract: or, that the negotiation outcome of one contract might feed into the initiation of another (cf. Robinson, 1995, 1996), much as the 'outcomes' evident in *Figure 2* (ABI) feed back into the inputs represented by an iteratively developing 'propensity' to trust – or, more precisely perhaps, to trust *anew*. Support for thinking 'outside the box' in this way comes from the observation posited by Ring and Van de Ven (1992) that trust emerges over time as a 'consequence' of social interaction. Applied to models of the psychological contract, trust might also be interpreted conceptually as both input and output / outcome of the negotiation process.

To illustrate, in an earlier version of the *Figure 1* contract depiction Guest and Conway (1997) offered a model of the contract that distinguished explicitly between 'attitudinal consequences' and 'behavioural consequences', both linked under the heading of 'consequences'. Applying this model (*Figure 4*), contract

researchers are thus invited both to observe employee behaviour and get inside their heads in order to elicit or infer attitudes towards employers and, potentially, towards other employees – a process illustrated conceptually by the ‘what if?’ scenarios discussed in chapter two.

Figure 4: *A four-box model of the contract*



Source: Guest and Conway (1997, p. 6, Fig. 1)

The 'attitudinal' and 'behavioural' distinction evident in this version of the contract connects, from a trust research perspective, with the three-stage model of trust posited by Yamagishi (2005). It also connects strongly with 'affective' / 'cognitive' distinction developed by McAllister (1995). Connecting with the Maslow (1954) model of human propensity 'security' as an attitudinal consequence might be interpreted as 'perceptions of trustworthiness' towards the employer and his / her apparent propensity to offer secure and safe conditions for work (Conchie & Donald, 2010): here the connecting arrows would need to connect both left and right in order to truly capture 'trust as process'. This left to right dynamic would suggest a time-line and thus accentuate the perceived distance between the 'now' and the potential outcomes / outputs

of the future. Uncertainty inevitably shrouds the gap between present and future time, thus foregrounding the salience of trust.

To illustrate, employees who are experiencing a state of employment insecurity are likely to seek out information - formally or informally - about their colleagues' intentions about staying or quitting. This information is likely to be drawn from across organisational boundaries connecting with some sense of market dynamics (cf. Varey, 2000). In response, a shift in perception by employee and / or employer is likely to impact on the type and added value potential of the contract they perceive themselves to be negotiating, and thus on the perceived salience of trust within it (cf. De Cuyper & De Witte, 2005).

Distinguishing between outputs and outcomes

In order to link trust to measures of HRM performance reference to 'outcomes' would tend to involve qualitative or so-called 'soft' measures of performance (cf. Guest, 1999). Based on the view of employees as 'assets' that might be developed, outcomes in this sense would correlate with both attitudinal and behavioural 'consequences', as suggested in *Figure 4*. By contrast, 'outputs' as measures of performance tend to be calculated and expressed in 'hard' or more quantitative terms (cf. Guest, 1989). Echoing Legge (1998), this assumes that employees are perceived primarily as a cost to the employer and therefore an investment that needs to be exploited in order to generate a quantifiable 'return on investment' (ROI).

Quit or stay?

From an employee perspective the behavioural consequences highlighted in *Figure 4* might be reinterpreted in terms of a recordable 'act of trust'. In HRM practice and research, such outputs include binary 'yes / no' records of an employee's intention to stay or quit - reformulated, perhaps, in a choice or intention to 'entrust' their career development to one employer or line-manager. Conway and Briner (2007) cite a raft of psychological contract research designed

to elicit data on such intentions as a consequence or 'effect' of perceived breach of contract on employee experiences of job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and the intention to stay or quit (2007:73). Eighteen of the nineteen studies cited rely on cross-sectional studies along with the major limitations these are likely to evince in terms of establishing causal (i.e. *why?*) type relationships (McAllister, 1995).

The one exception in this case is Bunderson whose (2001) longitudinal study encompassed a sample of 167 medical professionals in the USA. Interestingly, Bunderson draws a clear distinction between employee perceptions of breach as a response to organisation-wide (i.e. systemic) failures of the organisation as employer: e.g. in contexts for business failure where the organisation lacks the resources to deliver on previously agreed transactional promises and obligations to its employees. This perception is contrasted with more individually located 'professional' perceptions of breach where the individual employee experiences a loss of trust in the relational aspects of the contract. It should be noted that the 'professional' emphasis chosen by Bunderson (2001) probably resonated among the sample population chosen because this status would inform their 'I' or overlapping individual and collective self-image or perception / attribution as a trustworthy medical professional (cf. Rosenberg, 1992). Collectively, these self-attributions might inform inputs such as (professional) 'expectations' and 'professional' as opposed to the 'organisational / involvement' climate specified as inputs in *Figure 4*.

Combining reference to *Figures 3* and *4* the consequence of a professional employee quitting an employer might arise from a loss of trust generated by the employee's perception that a particular employer was no longer able or willing to offer sufficient reward for the employee's loyalty to i) the current employer and ii) to whatever the employee might regard as the attitudes and behaviours expected among members of some more broadly defined professional community. This invocation of community is relevant because it challenges the 'quit or stay' question when embedded in organisation-specific contexts. As with academics (cf. Becher, 1989) the loyalty and 'professional trust' (Frowe, 2005) expressed by certain groups of employees tends to gravitate horizontally and

outwards towards 'the profession' rather than 'within the *Figure 1* box' towards a particular employer. Understanding this orientation might help explain why so many academics resist the trend in 'managerialism' in universities and other PSOs (Hoyle & Wallace, 2005) and the so-called 'customer orientation' increasingly influencing HRM policy decisions in PSOs around the world (Flynn, 2007).

3.8 Interpreting trust as input

Having conceptually relocated the trust element of the psychological contract from 'content' towards 'outputs' and 'outcomes', it becomes conceptually easier now to explore trust as 'input'. The emphasis given to 'positive expectations' in the Rousseau et al (1998) definition of trust suggests a point at which HRM practitioners might formulate policies and practices designed to 'manage' trust (Wellin, 2007); or, at least, attempt to manage the expectations of employees seeking relational reassurance and meaning in trust (cf. Guest & Conway, 1997; Herriot, et. al, 1997). In broader sociological terms this is what Giddens (1991) might refer to as an individual's quest for 'ontological security' or 'a belief in the continuity of self-identity over space and time, and the reliability of social life' (Tucker, 1998:83). In *Figure 3* there is explicit reference to the 'expectations' and prior 'experience' that employees individually and collectively bring to interpretations and re-negotiations of 'trust in the psychological contract'.

HRM policy as input

As highlighted by Breeman (2006), policies as targeted interventions in the routine of people's daily work experiences can prompt responses that serve to both enhance and destroy trust. Interpreted as 'input', trust thus becomes both a risky and 'pivotal question' (Breeman, 2006:9) in HRM policy formulation and implementation. To illustrate, Guest et al (2000) surveyed 610 UK organisations - each with over fifty employees - and discovered that when HRM practices are applied 'effectively' (i.e. congruent with stated strategic goals) they served to improve both organisational performance *and* stakeholder perceptions of a

positive modification in employee attitudes and behaviours. This assessment of 'effective' HRM policy implementation reconnects with Guest (1989), who defined 'HRM policy' in terms of four generic 'goals': *strategic integration, flexibility, quality, and commitment*. The 'flexibility' policy emphasis reoccurs in the aforementioned Raeder & Grote (2005) survey and might indicate what HRM practitioners *prefer* to believe about measures of their own performance at any given time. The 'commitment' policy reference is interesting because it appears prominently in Guest's ongoing work with conceptualisations of the psychological contract: in the three-box model 'organizational commitment' appears as a 'consequence'.

Drawing on Guest (1989), Torrington et al define 'commitment' as a performance goal; namely, as 'ensuring that employees feel bound to the organisation and are committed to high performance in their behaviour' (2008:36). As such, HRM practitioners might reinterpret employee 'loyalty' more self-interestedly as 'commitment'. Apart from the rather feudalistic connotations that might be read into this choice of terminology, emphasising 'commitment to the organisation' also raises questions about employee commitment to managers as agents of these organisations, and particularly to managers who appear incompetent – a line of enquiry explored in Part Two.

HRM practice as input

In general terms, HRM practice represents the behavioural choices that HRM practitioners express when attempting to implement HRM policy (Guest, 1989). These observable choices can be perceived serially as 'acts of trust'. Interpreted more widely than in the Yamagishi (2005) model, the act of trust here might represent the practitioner's 'trust in' other employees. Applied reflexively, it can indicate the HRM practitioner's 'trusting stance' or faith in his/her own judgement and legitimacy of action (cf. McKnight & Chervany, 2006). Reconnecting between HRM practice and the four generic policy goals outlined by Guest (1989), it should be noted that any HRM policy might be planned or emergent (cf. Mintzberg, 1983). It might emerge in response to employee

feedback as inferred from their trusting attitudes and behaviours. Through observed HRM practice, policies might be interpreted explicitly or implicitly – the ambiguous source, it appears, of many studies of perceived contract breach. Consequently, a manager's decision to appear 'more trusting' towards staff would represent contract *input*.

The trust-control dilemma

One potential and routine act of trust - or distrust - occurs each time a manager delegates a task to another employee. Echoing Yamagishi (2005) this act draws on the manager's perception / assessment of who might be appropriate for the task and, ultimately, on the manager's general disposition to trust other employees with particular tasks. Relevant to such situation-specific contexts Charles Handy makes vivid reference to a 'trust-control' dilemma where 'trust implies giving someone the right to make mistakes' (1993:332). Against a background of ubiquitous uncertainty, the risk of 'making mistakes' is both routine and ever present. In Handy's terms, the dilemma can be expressed as a continuum along which managers can gauge the nature and intent of their delegation of tasks:

TRUST < > < > CONTROL

At one end of the continuum there is a managerial emphasis on 'control' - the task can be delegated in tightly specified format thus allowing little space, time or other resources for employee initiative and a 'right to make mistakes'. By emphasising control the manager attempts to reduce the risk of mistakes and of resource wastage. However, over-emphasis on control might (as an outcome) 'kill creativity' (cf. Amabile, 1998). However, emphasis on 'control' should not be interpreted only negatively. Key stakeholders might link control to efficiency and economy of managerial performance. Also, subordinates themselves might prefer this style of delegation as it gives them the sense of security commonly associated with HRM processes of monitoring, coaching or mentoring as employees as trustees are given the opportunity to reduce the risk of 'failure' in

their performance (Tomlinson, 2004). However, employees experiencing overbearing or insecure managers can become too dependent on feeling comfortable, 'safe', or even stifled, thereby rendering themselves and their teams / organisations less adaptive to the emerging challenges of a risk society where networked trust represents a key resource (cf. Beck, 2005; Kurihara, 2006). Echoing Luhmann, these employees become too confident – even complacent – in contexts for task delegation, thereby diminishing the value of being trusted and / or in trusting in their own abilities. Eventually, these employees might just quit, taking their creative talents elsewhere (cf. Amabile, 1998, 1990).

At the other end of the continuum lies the possibility for managers to emphasise 'trust' - or, emphasising process – *trusting* in how they structure or delegate work to employees. As the model suggests, trust stands in a dynamic (albeit, binary) relationship to control. By the logic of the continuum managers can choose to trust employees more and control them less. To illustrate, employees who are relatively new to a task or work situation could be offered more control at the beginning of the task completion process and then, gradually, more trust. In this way managers can seek to 'manage' employee expectations in that the employee recognises that their relative inexperience is being openly catered for: employees perceive that they are not being unduly exposed. One reason why managers might avoid emphasising trust is out of fear of appearing weak, or of encouraging work that undermine their claims to competence and thus (potentially) undermine their status in the organisational hierarchy. As with all input decisions, emphasising control does not mean that managers can in practice control what subsequently happens - unless, perhaps, a critical point the manager decides to reclaim the task. From a management perspective it is here the 'dilemma' arises and where managers become 'prisoners' of the expectations defining their role and status within the organisation.

Linking inputs to business performance

In theory trust encourages members of these teams to take risks and to share information and thereby perform more effectively than strictly controlled teams

(Amabile, 1998; Druskat & Wolff, 2003; Henry, 2002; Lee-Kelley, 2008). In theory, emphasising trust reduces the need for costly control mechanisms. Why then does reference to 'control' appear to remain so embedded in definitions and discussions of 'management'? In western contexts, managers commonly appear 'duty-bound' to emphasise control with claims such as 'this is what managers do' (Mead, 2005). Probed more deeply, such claims might be revealed to mask a type of affected existential anxiety, where de-emphasising control appears synonymous with 'losing control' and thereby perceptibly threatening a manager's social and (by their own subjective estimation) moral legitimacy and confidence (cf. Kierkegaard, 1843; Baier, 1983). Möllering (2005) looks beyond this polarised duality by exploring (conceptually, at least) the negotiation of positive expectations between social actors. He illuminates how the 'either/or' poles of the trust-control dilemma might meet three-dimensionally to form the type of 'both/and' opportunity more common to eastern philosophies (cf. Möllering, 2006a) and, increasingly, to contexts for C2C e-commerce (cf. Xiao & Benbasat, 2003, 2007).

Linking inputs to perceptions of trustworthiness

Research linking HRM attitudinal input and (employee) performance outputs is still undeveloped (cf. Tzafrir, 2003). However, perception remains a key process here. This insight finds support in research by Delaney and Huselid (1996), who surveyed 727 organisations across various business sectors in order to conclude that 'progressive HRM practices, including selectivity in staffing, training, and incentive compensation, are positively related to *perceptual* measures of organizational performance' (1996:965 - *my emphasis*). Echoing Mead (2005), 'effective communication' becomes a measure of effective performance, and particularly in contexts for cross-cultural HRM communications. Echoing Herriot and Pemberton (1997), communication ('informing') is one of four main choices available to HRM practitioners if they wish to change the perceived shape of an existing psychological contract – other choices are negotiation, monitoring, and re-negotiation or 'exit'. Specifically, the focus for communication might be on 'what promises they expect from employees and what employees can expect in

return' (Conway & Briner, 2007:165). Where these promises appear by one or other party to be traduced, perceptions of contract breach emerge.

Introducing 'MAGSOP'

Having now 'broken' the conceptual 'mould' of the psychological contract it becomes easier to imagine meanings being attributed to trust anywhere within and beyond the outer boundary of 'the organisation' - the outer box of *Figure 1*. Having explored trust as both a potential input and output of negotiating the contract, this inner space within the primary organisational boundary over time becomes representative of - and perhaps even synonymous with - the employment relationship' (cf. Armstrong, 2006). Against this background there is an opportunity to explore trust more broadly and guided by more seasoned explorers in the terrain of trust research. In one notable and relevant example, Bijlsma and Van de Bunt (2003) sought to identify which line-manager behaviours served as cues for subordinates to express trust in their managers. It should be noted here that the authors make no explicit use of psychological contract theory: rather their focus is on exploring 'antecedents to trust' in employee / manager relations.

Emphasising an individual employee perspective the authors interviewed seventy-six employees of a Dutch hospital. From these data six behaviours were identified that appeared most commonly related to trust: 'monitoring', 'appreciation of prior good work', 'giving feedback', 'support', 'openness', and 'problem solving', meaning here line-manager support in helping an employee sort out problems with other organisational stakeholders. Together, these headings were arranged into the mnemonic MAGSOP, which also served subsequently as a coded matrix for the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data generated by further interviews and a cross-sectional questionnaire survey comprising of sixty-four items. The overarching research objective was to generate a new parsimonious model describing a 'bottom-up' perspective on 'antecedents to trust in managers'. As such, the focus for research might be located on the arrow linking 'cause' and 'content' in *Figure 1*.

The six MAGSOP behaviours represent an initial snapshot the hospital staff's perception and experience of the employment relationship. In generating MAGSOP, the researchers adopted a process of 'topic-guided interviews' adopting principles developed by Kvale (1996). To cite the authors directly (2003:641):

- *The kernel of this method is to "pose short questions and getting (sic) long answers", to get as close to the concepts, meanings and relations between phenomena that respondents use to make sense of their experiences and, subsequently, to build their opinions on.*

It is not clear whether the respondents were informed explicitly of the research focus on trust, as the type of questions cited in the article include: 'Do you often meet your manager?' and 'Which topics are discussed?' These discussions were held in Dutch. Subsequently, the researchers generated a questionnaire comprising sixty-four items designed to test seven MAGSOP hypotheses. The first is:

- **H1:** *Monitoring by managers based on clear expectations will be positively related to trust in managers (Bijlsma & Van de Bunt, 2003:647).*

As with the Conway (1999) text reviewed earlier, this hypothesis statement leaves ambiguous the question of whose interpretation of 'clarity' is operative here - a tendency evinced subsequently in phrases such as 'low incidence of problems' and 'appreciation for good work'. In the event, 661 questionnaires (90.5% of responses) were deemed usable in the coded MAGSOP analysis. After application of a series of analytical techniques (regression, Ragin, Boolean, and others) the 'most parsimonious' derivation of the MAGSOP model was identified as 'MGS' because 'a total of 97 per cent of the respondents with a (data return) pattern including monitoring, guidance and support showed trust in the manager' (Bijlsma & Van de Bunt, 2003:657).

The authors identify two key limitations of their study. First the pattern of '97%' cited above indicates a significant number of 'deviant cases' in the data set.

These might derive from the ambiguity inherent in some of the questionnaire items and (as suggested above) in the formulation of the hypotheses the survey instruments were designed to test. By extension, a second major limitation relates to research context of one provincial hospital in The Netherlands. Consequently, it is unclear how, for example, the processes of perception and attribution that generated the data supporting the 'MGS' finding might be generalised to contexts for research more relevant to international or cross-cultural management. However, and as the authors state finally: 'this is only a beginning' (Bijlsma & Van de Bunt, 2003:660).

Linking trust to HRM performance

Developing a converse perspective Tzafrir (2005) is one of few empirical trust researchers to explore 'managerial perceptions of trust in employees' (2005:1600). In terms of HR practices Tzafrir explores links between the trusting stance expressed by HR managers and their decisions to match employee expectations of training as a reward for work performance: the discussion appears to boil down to a HRM policy discussion around 'trust in employee training'. A cross-sectional survey among 104 HR managers from 'leading companies' across business sectors in Israel concluded that 'HR managers are more likely to offer training and shape the internal promotion system when trust is high' (Tzafrir, 2005:1600). The link here is to 'high performance work practices' identified by Huselid (1995). The theoretical underpinning is drawn from social exchange theory, building (uncritically) on conceptualisations of reciprocal trust posited by (Blau, 1964) and employee expectations of reward (Guest & Peccei, 1994). Measures of 'effective' HRM performance appear to support Guest's attempts to link trust and HRM performance; however, the measures listed by Tzafrir include an organisation's relative 'market performance' – a measure he assumes will improve when HR managers invest in training (cf. Harel & Tzafrir, 1999). The assumption aspect here is key, for such correlations rely on the integrity of economic models applied to marketing concepts such as 'attractiveness' (cf. Sato, 2007b). They

also assume rather simplistically a discernible link between training inputs and performance outputs / outcomes. Given recent global economic crises, this faith in economic models of ROI appears generous. As with the Bijlsma and Van de Bunt (2003) study, Tzafrir talks about 'employee expectations' (of training-based rewards) without drawing explicitly on psychological contract research.

Tzafrir (2005) focuses on tightly selected conceptualisations of trust, including general reference to the ABI model discussed in chapter two (*Figure 2*). To recap briefly, ABI is supported by a definition of trust that highlights 'the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party' (Mayer et. al, 1995:712). Tzafrir (2005) uses this model to frame his understanding of the risks taken by managers who decide to invest in staff training. Where an employment relationship based on trust is present this risk of investment should (ideally) generate a return that allows managers to free up space, time, attention and other key resources away from processes of 'monitoring' or 'control' and towards more value-adding forms of behaviour such as improved processes of organisational effectiveness and efficiency: in short, a 'trust-control'-type dilemma' and (potentially) with potentially negative consequences for employee creativity and commitment and for organisational performance overall. In effect, Tzafrir uses the ABI model to inform his approach towards eliciting the extent to which HR managers appear willing to trust in - and thereby render themselves *vulnerable* to - employees who are might underperform and thus undermine the manager's decision to invest in their training.

Tzafrir claims that his data can be used to generate profiles of each manager's 'personal characteristics' and thus their organisation-specific trusting propensity and behaviour (2005:1615). Aggregating these individual manager profiles generates 'high' or 'low trust' profiles for individual organisations. The assumption here is that, by offering training as a reward, HR managers express trust in employees and that this pattern of investment choices shapes each organisation's distinctive HRM culture and thus its trust 'profile'. These organisation-specific profiles are then correlated to measures of each

organisation's 'market performance'. The thesis emerging from this analysis is that the extent to which HR managers trust employees and reward them with training improves the market performance of the organisation (2005:1618). Tzafrir claims this to be an 'objective' assessment of performance and one designed to counter the limitations of relying primarily on 'subjective' and 'one respondent' sources of data.

As with the Bijlsma and Van de Bunt (2003) study discussed earlier in this chapter, one research limitation admitted by Tzafrir (2005) is that restricting his survey sample to 'a single national system' is insufficient to generalise his findings internationally. A conceptual base for attempting to develop this line of enquiry is rehearsed in the following chapter.

3.9 Summary

One insight emerging out of the review presented in this chapter is that the location of 'trust' at the core of the psychological contract is unstable. Insights gleaned from chapter two suggest that 'trust' as process might appear coherently as both input *and* output / outcome to the contract, in addition to stabilising its core 'content'. The bulk of the literature reviewed thus far has assumed western English-speaking audiences and western contexts for HRM. Consequently, in chapter four an attempt is made to develop a combined 'international employee' and IHRM perspective on 'trust in the psychological contract'.

Chapter Four: Developing an international employee perspective

'The first lesson of Theory Z is trust'

(William Ouchi, 1981:5)

4.0 Introduction

Processes of identifying and working with diverse perspectives are fundamental to social research (Gilbert, 1993). In visual terms a 'perspective' denotes how a person perceives an object: e.g. 'the psychological contract' of *Figure 1*. As with 'learning' trust (cf. Hardin, 1992), socialisation into a given culture influences how people tend to perceive objects and other people and how they compare the salience of one object or person in relation to another (cf. Baxandall, 1988; Jandt, 2010). A perspective is also a cognitive construct denoting how people attribute individual and / or collective meaning to what they see (cf. Geertz, 1973). As with trust, developing a perspective implies an affective response (cf. McAllister, 1995): some observed phenomena *feel* more 'right' than others (cf. Jones, 1996). One task of social researchers is to identify, locate and compare diverse perspectives or 'points of view' on a particular object or phenomenon. By eliciting these researchers simultaneously elicit something of people's individual and collective beliefs and assumptions of what that object or phenomenon means in their daily life.

The discussion in this chapter draws on published insights and experiences in the overlapping fields of International Management (IM), Cross-cultural Management (CCM) and IHRM research and practice. By selecting judiciously from this vast corpus of research and practice an attempt is made to contextualise what 'an international employee perspective' on trust might look like, thereby preparing for the preliminary studies in chapter five.

4.1 Working with 'international employees'

In chapter one a distinction was made between processes of HRM and those of *international* HRM (IHRM). It was noted also that this distinction rests on more than whatever nationality might be ascribed to the employee-managers in

question and / or to the organisations they work for: rather it represents the nature of their strategic response to changes in the strategic business environment of their organisations: i.e. what might generally be termed 'globalisation' (cf. Ohmae, 2001; Giddens, 2006).

The discussion in chapter one also established the research focus of this study: eliciting individual employee perspectives on trust in the psychological contract (cf. Rousseau, 1989, 1990). The key question here is the extent to which identifying these employees as 'international' might support or facilitate this endeavour – a key question because answers to it will influence the design of the sampling and selection processes rehearsed during the preliminary studies.

Research terminology

In its etymological meaning an *employee* is someone who are 'involved in something towards the attainment of a specific purpose' (Ayto, 1990:200). From an HRM / IHRM practitioner perspective employees are socio-legal entities employed to achieve specified tasks, for which they might expect some monetary or non-monetary reward (Edwards, 2003). They can be identified and compared in terms of how they choose to become involved in these tasks and in how they appear to commit to the achievement of the tasks both as individuals and collectively: e.g. as members of a team (Wilkinson & Dundon, 2010; Poon & Rowley, 2010a). Without employees it is difficult to conceive of 'managers': the two roles co-exist in a state of interdependency much as 'leaders' and followers' do (cf. Northouse, 2006). Echoing Mayer et al (1995) both managers and employees contribute towards shaping the dynamic of the dyadic employment relationship with interpersonal trust at its core: as an observable outcome, each influences the other's relative performance (Kanter, 1983, Dirks, 2006). Within the outer box of *Figure 1* both managers and employees have the role and status of 'employees' as defined here. In the imaginary 'outer box' that is the design of this study, *all* participants are perceived as employees regardless of their relative position within the hierarchy of their employing organisations and of the business sector they work in – this for purposes of efficiency and equity.

International employees

An initial definition of the 'international employee' appeared in chapter one: i.e. as employees who routinely interact with people in and across a variety of national and regional cultural contexts and who appear to envisage their career development by reference to trends in international business and to shifts in global markets for employment (Sparrow et al, 2004). This profiling alone does not, however, distinguish these so-called 'international employees' - henceforth, and unless otherwise specified, referred to as 'IEs' - from what might then be termed 'non-international employees' participating in the research papers discussed previously: e.g. Robinson (1996), Atkinson (2007), McAllister (1995), Conway (1999). None of these uses 'nationality' *per se* as a variable factor in the sampling and selection of participants or in the analysis of the data they provide. Some demographic variables are considered, as in McAllister's identification of a major research limitation: i.e. 'almost 75 percent of the study's participants were highly educated men' (1995:54) - a limitation addressed in this current study where a 50:50 male / female participation is targeted. However 'targeted' does not mean *achieved*.

In common with these cited articles this current study applies a convenience sampling approach, rehearsed initially in the preliminary studies. The 'convenience' here is purposive and expresses a justifiable expectation of gaining ready access to a population of international managers and professionals and having the resources to begin working with them in pursuit of a chosen research objective - the justification is outlined in this chapter. Briefly this particular population of international employees (IEs) can be accessed in the context of programmes of management education and executive training in Europe and in Asia. These employees are already 'internationalised' to an extent by the research contexts we will operate in. As in the papers cited above these IEs are assumed *a priori* to represent something significant in that global domain for human activity that, echoing the sum of contributions to Sparrow et al (2004), has employees routinely interacting with other employees in and across a variety of national and regional cultural contexts.

Research opportunity

In a similar spirit to Sparrow et al (2004) and related texts such as Briscoe et al (2009), a systematic attempt is made here to elicit and understand what IEs individually and collectively perceive as salient in the employment relationships they routinely negotiate and in the global career opportunities they seek out. A systematic attempt is made to 'see things from the international employee perspective' in the hope that the insights gleaned in this way might inform future IHRM research and practice (Sparrow et al, 2004:xvii).

This represents a genuine research opportunity. For, as highlighted in previous chapters much empirical research into trust and the psychological contract has been conducted in collaboration with local and (it appears) largely mono-cultural groups of research respondents. These are typically students or graduates of US American business schools (cf. Rousseau, 1990, Robinson, 1996). Alternatively the empirical researcher might seek employee-respondents at their places of work in the UK (cf. Conway, 1999; Atkinson, 2007). The conceptual 'baggage' that researchers take with them into the field (e.g. *Figures 1 and 2*) tends to display markedly western and even ethnocentric features of design (cf. Jandt, 2010) – a limitation also admitted by the scholars who apply them (cf. Conway & Briner, 2007; Schoorman et al, 2007).

Simultaneously, the examples of empirical research discussed thus far have tended to elicit data from employee-managers in what might be termed domestic or 'non-international' as opposed to 'international' organisations: e.g. the Dutch and Israeli employees surveyed respectively by Bijlsma and Van de Bunt (2003) and Tzafrir (2005). The relatively narrow profile of these nationality or culture-specific sample populations is recognised as another limitation by the researchers involved, probably because they are keen to generalise their findings beyond their nationality and / sector-specific peer groups and prefer to address a wider and more international audience in what are, increasingly, globalised academic disciplines. This study represents a very modest step in this direction.

4.2 The global context: demographic shift

IHRM researchers and practitioners recognise how national and industry-specific workforces are becoming more diverse (cf. Torrington et al, 2009). In response empirical researchers of trust are encouraged to diversify their sample populations (cf. Mayer et al, 1995; Schoorman, 2007). Evidence of global demographic trends supports this view; for example, the fact that populations and workforces in so-called developed (e.g. 'G20') economies are ageing and birth rates are generally falling. Employers in North America and Europe are making efforts to ensure more attractive working environments for older people, women, and minorities (Wei & Rowley, 2010b) As highlighted previously, organisations worldwide and of all types are becoming more diverse in terms of the gender, race, ethnicity, age, national origin and other personal characteristics of their members (cf. Brief, 2008). Recognition of these trends adds contextual detail to IHRM research. It connects with what motivates human beings to migrate and to take risks in search of employment and a perceptibly 'better quality of life' (cf. UNDP, 2010). Recalling *Figure 2*, more people seek international or cross-border solutions along with people and institutions they need to trust actively in order to achieve this assumed quality of life and international employee identity (cf. Giddens, 1991).

This mass movement of people and (with them) pan-social and multi-ethnic aspiration creates an international risk environment that gives further context to empirical studies focussed on trust (cf. Beckert, 2006). To illustrate the scale, World Bank indicators (2010) suggest that three per cent of the world's population are currently living or working in countries other than those of their birth. This amounts to approximately 210 million people migrating for work each year with a 50-50 split between men and women. Furthermore, and for the first time in human history, more people live in urban than in rural areas worldwide (UN, 2010). Here it should be noted that the fastest growing cities are located in so-called 'developing' or emerging economies yet, as Budhwar and Bhatnagar (2009) and Elegebe (2010) maintain, there remains a dearth of 'developing world perspectives' on IHRM practice and research. Continuing to apply established 'western' HRM constructs in such international contexts risks

missing whatever constitutes a 'local' perspective and even distorting local HRM values and practices with outcomes potentially detrimental to the employees involved. There is a case for developing a less biased and more inclusive 'global' perspective on IHRM practice and research (Elegebe, 2010:19).

Global markets

How these migrant employees choose to trust or distrust exerts a shaping influence on the global and (by their physical, cognitive and emotional movement) transnational markets for employment and economic opportunity they create and operate within. Accordingly the concept of 'international' as opposed 'domestic' employees is established in processes of IHRM research and reflects the globalisation of the business environments for all organisations regardless of (for example) age, size, business sector and ownership structure (Briscoe et al, 2009). This affects processes of resourcing that, as highlighted in chapter one, encompass decisions of employee recruitment and selection - processes analogous in their purpose and potential effect to researcher-driven processes of sampling and selection.

Two significant shifts in the emerging international markets for staff resourcing should be highlighted: *diversity* and *professional skills and qualifications* (Torrington et al, 2009:109-110). Diversity encompasses demographic variables such as gender, age and nationality - as targeted in this current study. It also encompasses a host of so-called 'non visible' variables such as attitude to work, task flexibility, and willingness to engage in further education or professional development - variables that might also become significant in this study. The professional skills variable connects with the insight that markets for employment, both nationally and internationally, are becoming structured around a perceived shortage of employees with higher order skills and competences (cf. Bhatnagar, 2009). In this context a 'skill' can be defined as an ability to do something that might be transferred across tasks and indeed across employers: English language ability and IT skills, for example. From an HRM perspective skills can be trained and assessed against standard quantitative

measures: e.g. words per minute using keyboard skills. In contrast 'competencies' are often assumed to describe the manner in which skills are used. For example, communicating in English is a skill; communication while demonstrating cross-cultural sensitivity and thus securing a long-term international business relationship might be considered a competency. In truth, HRM / IHRM texts use these terms interchangeably, while the terms 'competence' and 'capacity / ability' also appear. It is useful here to recognise how Sparrow et al (2004:92-93) outline an 'international mindset' that employees including managers as employees need to develop if the knowledge, skills and competencies they have acquired and developed in their 'home' contexts are to be transferred effectively to 'international' contexts for business and management.

International?

However, and as Ohmae (1995, 2001) suggests, the issue of cross-border business and knowledge transfer is not restricted to any physical relocation across national political boundaries. Rather, it is about seeking out and responding to markets ever (and irrevocably) reconfiguring led by processes of globalisation and advances in communications technology (cf. Mühlbacher et al, 1999; Beckert, 2006). It is goods and services rather than employees that cross borders and add value to organisations: researchers can identify the employees they target by the markets they operate in. As such, these employees are 'international' in terms of outlook ('mindset') or 'perspective' and in terms of the impact they exert on the further development of global markets, and on the employees defined by reference to these. Consequently, the 'international perspective' of the managers / employees involved in business processes of value creation are those who, regardless of physical or geographical location, recognise opportunities to apply a 'transnational mentality' (cf. Bartlett & Ghoshal, 2002) when responding to the rapid and ongoing evolution of global markets for employment and individual career development.

Expatriate managers

One tried-and-tested approach that international organisations – notably multinational corporations or enterprises (MNCs / MNEs) - have developed in response to shifts in the global business environment is to recruit, train and assign a particular type of IE defined as the ‘expatriate manager’. Charles Fay initially adopts a global strategic management perspective, defining an ‘expatriate’ as opposed to a ‘local’ employee as ‘typically a mid-career manager, requiring family relocation and accommodation’ (Fay, 2010c:80). This relocation proceeds to a geographical location beyond the political, social, legal and economic reach of what the employer and (perhaps) the employee concerned had become accustomed to perceive as their ‘home’ working environment, even if ‘adopted’. Fay (2010b) emphasises the risk-opportunity and assumed cost-benefit calculations conducted by senior managers in organisations with a designed international exposure before choosing to move employees from one nationally-located operation to another in pursuit of enhanced international or global business performance (cf. Briscoe, 1995; Briscoe & Schuler, 2004). In fields of IM / CCM scholarly interest has tended to focus on the role of culture(s) in explaining failed assignments (cf. Mead, 1998, 2005; Briscoe & Schuler, 2004) – hence the foregrounding of IHRM concerns in reference to MNCs and MNEs or the types of organisations assumed to have the resources to manage such risks effectively.

Nonetheless, the failure rates in strategic business and, to an extent, in human terms of expatriate assignments regardless of provenance and destination appears high – an *appearance* that might have much to do with how scholars choose to measure ‘success’. For as Harzing (2002) suggests, the ‘earlier than planned’ return of an expatriate might have more to do with the sponsoring organisation’s change in strategy rather than the elicited ‘fact’ that the expatriate’s spouse failed to assimilate into the host culture.

Against this background Fay (2010c), an experienced ‘Compensation & Benefits’ professional, emphasises how the nationality of the expatriate employee is not the key strategic issue. Rather, it is the identification and selection of the

individual as an outcome of pre-determined IHRM policy designed to govern the investment to be committed to the expatriate assignment and thereby the risk to be generated by this investment. According to Fay (2010c:82):

- *The catchphrase ‘Think global but act local’ is often meaningless when applied to global business policies. A better way to think about global compensation systems is in terms of ‘global compensation policies and processes’, with local outcomes tempered by law, customs and markets.*

Fay acknowledges how so many expatriate assignments appear to ‘fail’ because the employees so assigned lack the required skills and competencies such as cross-cultural awareness and flexibility; some ‘expats’ fail to adapt to local living and working conditions, including climate and diet. These outcomes are largely unpredictable. Consequently, Fay (2010c) adopts a ‘hard’ rather than a ‘soft’ IHRM policy stance, suggesting that employers should invest effort in getting the policy and risk management processes right rather than worrying too much about individual factors such as personality – an approach that reflects more the experimental rather than the ethnographic approaches to IHRM research.

Consequently, in terms of general research implications these examples from IHRM practice suggest that, having identified a purpose and designed a strategy towards fulfilling this purpose, initially (at least) the nationality or other variable profile feature of the individual IE one is working with might be standardised. In the context of this current study this would imply *not* dividing respondents into nationality groups as, for example, in the Yamagishi et al (2007) experimental research cited in chapter two. Rather it means applying the type of blanket ‘IE’ assignation referred to above. Beyond the initial phase of research collaboration the individual contribution of each respondent might be negotiated discretely as the dyadic research relationship develops.

International managers

As stated above, for the specific purposes of this current research ‘international managers’ or ‘professionals’ (cf. McAllister, 1995; Atkinson, 2007) are to be identified in blanket fashion as IEs. Having said this, terms such as ‘international

manager' or 'expatriate' continue to dominate the discourse of standard IM or CCM textbooks (cf. Brewster et al, 2004; Mead, 1998, 2005; Schneider & Barsoux, 2003; Mead & Andrews, 2009; Steers et al, 2010). This is perhaps because an employee who risks investing in courses of education that use such textbooks - themselves products of a burgeoning global market in international management education - is likely to be perceived as a 'manager' in terms of the position they hold or aspire to in their employing organisation.

Consequently, one way to identify international employees is to locate the international managers who work with them. Starting with a definition, Mead (2005:16, *citing from* Gooderham & Nordhaug, 2004:1) defines 'international managers' as people who routinely engage in 'generating and transferring knowledge across initial settings, organizations and countries'. For 'managers' read 'professionals' (McAllister, 1995)? Here the 'initial setting' could be equated to the 'visible dimension' posited by Ohmae (2001): i.e. the physical location where a researcher might meet these managers face-to-face. Opportunities already identified include contexts given by international programmes of management education and executive / expatriate training comprising who self-select from an uncertain yet not wholly unpredictable range of nationality and business backgrounds: i.e. assuming the cost barrier to participate will influence the composition of the cohort. As McAllister (1995) discovered, working towards such contexts can improve the probability element of sampling yet risk loss of diversity. Here the 'generating of knowledge' element is a process both vital and fundamental to the research process. The international researcher might justifiably assume a commonality of interest with these managers: they might learn from each other, thus offering a powerful justification for convenience sampling among business school students and graduates – business schools that, in terms of students and staff cohorts, are very likely becoming increasingly international by nationality and by 'mindset' (cf. Sparrow et al, 2004; Steers et al, 2010). Processes of communicating and transferring knowledge 'across organisations and countries' is where the so-called 'cyber dimension' in Ohmae's conceptualisation of 'an invisible continent' comes to the fore.

4.3 Profiling international employees

As indicated in chapter one an IE holding a manager position might be defined as 'someone who works with or through people across national boundaries to accomplish global corporate objectives' (Steers et al, 2010:28). The 'global corporation' tag here highlights the bias in much IHRM research towards examining developments in internationally active organisations such as multinational corporations and enterprises, MNCs and MNEs respectively (cf. Briscoe, 1995; Briscoe & Schuler, 2004; Briscoe et al, 2009). Understandably, international business school graduates are likely to seek employment in such organisations; correspondingly, MNCs appear willing to recruit such graduates through events such as career fairs or, less publicly, by using IHRM consultancies and so-called 'headhunting' agencies who operate (fish?) in markets commonly referred to as 'talent pools' (cf. Michaels et al, 2001; Harris et al, 2003). As demonstrated in the Robinson (1996) article business school tutors and researchers have a professional interest in learning how their type of graduate fares in the increasingly competitive and globalised markets for both national and international employment. And, as in both the Robinson (1996) and McAllister (1995) papers, it is considered both convenient and valid for empirical researchers of trust to adopt a similar approach to their own employee / respondent sampling and selection designs.

Types of IE

Briscoe and Schuler (2004) adopt the perspective of a generic MNC / MNE in order to identify three general 'types' of IE: 'parent-country nationals' or expatriates (PCNs), 'host country nationals' (HCNs), and 'third country nationals' or TCNs (2004:56-7). They thus use 'nationality' or 'country of origin' to distinguish between each type. However, probably more important from the organisational perspective is the strategic relevance of each type to particular staffing choices: i.e. the employee identification and selection processes being applied. From an IHRM practitioner perspective the key strategic questions are likely to be: What type of employee(s) do we want / need? What type of

employee(s) do we have available? A parallel observation recognises these as the type of questions that inform processes of research sampling and selection.

In contexts specific to IHRM research and practice Briscoe et al (2009) develop further IE types by considering factors such as length of assignments and the legal or regulatory (e.g. tax, residence and work permit) status of employees applicable for citizens of some or all nationalities. An empirical researcher here might try to ascertain how long and through what structures and qualities of 'local' employment relationships an IE or expatriate might have to experience before they began to lose their perceive PCN / TCN identity and, from an IHRM practitioner perspective, become more identifiable and thereby of potential strategic value as a HCN. The notion here is 'going native' as IEs begin a stage of their career as cultural 'outsiders' and over time appear to become accepted as group 'insiders' in terms of the (local) culture-specific values they espouse and the behaviours they are observed to adopt. This type of research would serve to challenge the often highly generalised conclusions evident in many 'how to' IM texts and, as a consequence, in many case study materials used in business schools worldwide. Correspondingly, Briscoe and Schuler (2004:56) give strategic consideration to the IE's starting and closing legal status: e.g. as an 'immigrant' or as a 'returnee' employee or 'inpatriate', represented by a 'PCN' who returns to work in the home country or organisation. This profiling assumes that the parent organisation has not relocated to another country or tax jurisdiction: e.g. from New York to Singapore or Canton Zug in Switzerland. Ultimately, each categorisation depends on the employer's perspective on the direction and relative permanence of the IE's assignment and relocation. Apart from legal and tax reasons the nationality / nationalities of the employee might be incidental: as Schneider and Barsoux (2003:199) suggest, 'passports are not the most important indicator of competence'.

A CCM perspective

Adopting a more cross-cultural as opposed to international management perspective Steers et al (2010:29) describe three distinct types of IE. The first

includes expatriates and inpatriates, as discussed above. The second includes 'frequent flyers' whose international experience comprises frequent changes of working environment: e.g. interim managers, project 'trouble-shooters', international consultants and professional 'telecommuters'. As with the 'frequent flyers' the third type of IE is identifiable in terms of their response to opportunities generated by advances in global communications and international transport infrastructures. These are so-called 'virtual' managers and employees who routinely lead or participate in teams comprising members who might never meet face-to-face: i.e. who might remain relative 'strangers' to each other and yet who might (depending on task specifications) work extremely effectively together. As suggested in chapter two, this type of interaction between relative strangers is becoming common in contexts for e-commerce (cf. McKnight and Chervany, 2006) and project teams, where time, space and frequency of contact is a key issue in how members might choose to trust in and collaborate with each other (cf. Lee-Kelly, 2006, 2008; Maznevski et al, 2006). However, and as suggested by Schoorman et al (2007), even 'virtual' strangers maintain some experience of culture-specific anchoring: recalling Ohmae (2001), the 'cyber dimension' is not (yet) detached from the 'laws of gravity' that govern the 'visible dimension'.

Steers et al (2010) conclude in curiously evolutionary terms by identifying a new 'global managers' as an evolving 'variety of species' before stating that 'in today's global economy, almost all managers are involved in some form or another with global management' (2010:28). Given the increasing exposure of all types of organisations to global business and market pressures, this claim could be extended to include 'almost all' employees also.

4.4 The global mindset

As suggested above, the expatriate IE experience is established in IHRM literature, and indeed remains a mainstay resource for insights and case examples of the cross-cultural training and consultancy industries (cf. Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2004; Scullion & Collings, 2006). As also

suggested above there appears to be a growing interest among IM, CCM and IHRM researchers (and their publishers) to develop a differentiated 'global' perspective on IHRM. To what extent might this move towards what tentatively appeals as a 'paradigm shift' influence the design decisions of IHRM researchers today; and specifically, researchers with a focus on trust?

Vladimir Pucik of the *Institute for Management Development* (IMD) in Lausanne is one prominent scholar in European and East Asian management who prompted research interest by defining a 'global' manager as an employee 'with a cross-border responsibility, who has a flexible and open mind, with a well-rounded understanding of international business and an ability to work across cross-cultural and cross-functional boundaries... some may be expatriates; many have been expatriates, but probably few expatriates are global managers' (Pucik, 1998: 41). In this statement it is clear that he wishes to move the discussion on from the discourse dominated by reference to 'expatriate managers', although recognising that being an expatriate remains a deeply formative experience in any IE's career (cf. Schneider & Barsoux, 2003). Pucik's intervention moves the discussion away from business strategy *per se* towards a more social-psychological and strategic consideration of what type of employee might add most business value to an organisation's international and global operations. In this statement Pucik clearly identifies how expatriates who lack a global mindset do so *not* because of the experience they 'have' but rather on *how* they *process* this experience and to what business and professional objectives. It is here the concept of the 'global mindset' – as opposed to the 'international mindset' posited by Sparrow et al (2004) – becomes salient.

Definitions

From a CCM perspective Schneider and Barsoux describe the global mindset 'in terms of cognitive structures and processes: not only what one thinks but also how' (2003:199): i.e. a 'how' that might be observed and / or elicited in processes of empirical research. They further posit that one ambition common to internationally-oriented employees is to achieve a form of 'global citizenship' – a

conceptualisation that moves beyond the boundaries of the 'organisational citizenship' made explicit in *Figure 1*. In striving towards this status IEs recognise they 'have to manage different cultures at home and abroad, but within themselves as well' (2003:312): it is, essentially, a reflexive process – and in the terms presented – one that should appeal to trust and IHRM researchers also (cf. Hardin, 1992; Jones, 1996). For unlike 'nationality' or 'experience' (i.e. comparative length and / or perceived relevance of) the 'global mindset' is purported to represent a quality or capacity that IEs might express or develop independently of the ascriptions and interventions of IHRM practitioners or researchers. To illustrate, Sparrow et al emphasise the 'international mindset' as both an 'attitudinal perspective' (2004:42) and an 'attitudinal attribute' (2004:93). Here they draw on Bartlett and Ghoshal (1989:195) in describing a distinct 'matrix in the minds of managers'. Working in similar territory Schneider and Barsoux (2003:199) invoke 'cognitive structures' or 'the maps and scripts that managers use to navigate globally' – a fitting metaphor for a study such as this intent on exploring the 'trust' concept.

In more practical behavioural terms Paul Sparrow and colleagues describe the mindset as one that motivates employees to express and enact a 'willingness to move internationally': indeed, to move abroad before being asked (2004:140). This might entail self-selecting for the aforementioned 'expatriate' experience: e.g. voluntarily exiting an established domestic 'comfort zone', travelling abroad to gain international work experience and then using this experience to differentiate themselves from other more 'domesticated' players on the career market (cf. Steers et al, 2010). Such voluntary actions commonly feature in the CVs of international job applicants claiming competences of 'cognitive complexity' such as 'to comprehend differences, while at the same time be well integrated, to find similarities' (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003:199). The mindset is now routinely attributed to individual employees: e.g. in processes of competitive selection assessments (cf. Den Dekker et al, 2005) and, by extension, in the early identification of international employees with apparent 'leadership potential' (cf. Gregersen et al, 1998).

A diversity of perspectives

These conceptual insights connect with and develop emerging HRM / IHRM research agendas: e.g. those linking on the international / global mindset explicitly to notions of employee 'diversity' (cf. Sparrow & Marchington, 1998). Prophetically, Sparrow et al interpret the mindset as offering IHRM practitioners and researchers a window or 'insight into next generation of international managers' (2004:140) – a claim they then link to internationally established notions of 'talent' and of 'talent management' (cf. Michaels et al, 2001; Harris et al, 2003). Through all this scholarly discussion the vital element of employee performance is not ignored; indeed, Sparrow is a prominent researcher into international applications of the psychological contract in contexts for performance management (cf. Sparrow, 2008). Consequently, the concept of the international / global mindset can be integrated into interpretations of the psychological contract and thereby of developing an IE perspective on trust.

To illustrate, in recalling *Figure 1* the international / global mindset might be interpreted as a distinct input 'expectation' that IEs might bring to their negotiation of the contract. Assuming IHR managers are able to manage these expectations effectively the 'commitment' outputs of individual IEs might be aggregated with others to generate a performance output that enhances the organisation's profile as an effective 'international' organisation: i.e. one that, in tune with emerging markets, is strengthened by virtue of the global (as opposed to 'only' national or regional) alignment and embeddedness of its business operations and strategic thinking of its managers and employees (cf. Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1989; Ghoshal & Bartlett, 1988; Bartlett & Ghoshal, 2002).

Key features of the mindset

Common to HRM research some evidence of inflation appears in the terminology used: sometimes combining staking a claim for a 'paradigm shift' (cf. Guest, 1989). As IHRM becomes increasingly promoted as 'global HRM' (cf. Routledge, 2010) the international mindset now appears more commonly as the 'global mindset', and occasionally as the 'transnational' mindset. Synthesising from

Bartlett and Ghoshal (1989), Harris et al (2003), Schneider and Barsoux (2003), Briscoe and Schuler (2004), Sparrow et al (2004), Lee-Kelly (2006), Mansour et al (2007), Briscoe et al (2009) and Steers et al (2010), six key features of an employee's 'global mindset' can be identified as:

- *Perspective*: 'a way of viewing the world' that demonstrates awareness and acceptance of diversity among people and the many cultures they might help create and interact with; a capacity to 'capitalize on' cultural diversity (Steers et al, 2010:37-8); an 'ability to look for and learn from relevant differences while at the same time looking for commonality' (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003:198)
- *Confidence*: demonstrating a marked capacity to 'tolerate uncertainty' and 'manage global complexity, contradiction, and conflict' (Briscoe et al, 2009: 218)
- *Business insight*: demonstrating a keen 'awareness of national differences, global trends' and options, and the global impact of their own 'decisions and choices' in comparison with those of other employees and stakeholders (Briscoe et al, 2009:218)
- *Learning*: 'a restless curiosity' driving them to seek out opportunities for learning in support of their own and others' personal and professional growth and development (Briscoe et al, 2009:218), combining this with an understanding of how knowledge might be shared or transferred both within and across organisations (Sparrow et al, 2004:92); recognising that a 'need to know' type of mindset that can change to accommodate one oriented towards 'sharing new insights' (2004:105)
- *Control*: a willingness to question the structure of problems as they stand: rethinking and challenging boundaries of what is currently accepted as 'normal', expressing a consistent and strategic 'locus of control' approach to both individual and team tasks (Lee-Kelley, 2006)
- *Flexibility*: or what Steers et al term 'multicultural competence' (2010:37), demonstrated as an ability to adopt quickly and effectively to diverse culture-specific expectations: e.g. 'understanding that a signed contract can mean different things in different places' (Steers et al, 2010:38) – or, for that matter, an unsigned or implicit one (cf. Rousseau, 1989).

The global mindset concept supports the development of a global business, notably in contexts for leadership development. One prominent example is the

GLOBE project hosted by *Thunderbird School of Global Management* in the USA, which hosts a research and training institute entitled the *Global Mindset Institute* or GMI. Members of GMI have developed ‘an assessment tool to help determine who might be better at communicating, doing business with and influencing other people who are unlike themselves’ (www.thunderbird.edu, accessed 1st July 2010). The premise of this now well-established and much-cited research project is compelling. According to their homepage:

- *Most citizens of the world grow up as unicultural individuals who learn how to live and work with people who are like themselves. The global world of business today has brought many different unicultural individuals together, expecting them to work in multi-cultural and cross-cultural environments.*

This insight is relevant towards understanding what an IE perspective on trust might look like. Here a ‘perspective’ would be understood in contexts for CCM as ‘a way of viewing the world’ that demonstrates awareness and acceptance of diversity among people and the many cultures they might help create and interact with; a capacity to ‘capitalize on’ cultural diversity (Steers et al, 2010:37-8). It also suggests how difficult – or unnerving – it might be for employees and researchers ‘boxed’ in ‘unicultural’ modes of thinking and working to develop the ‘ability to look for and learn from relevant differences while at the same time looking for commonality’ (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003:198)

The Thunderbird GMI project assumes interaction between ‘unicultural individuals’ on the premise that each individual is aware of his / her own ‘unicultural’ perspective, and thus the visual, cognitive and (perhaps) affective bias they bring to a process of social interaction. Again we are reminded that McAllister (1995) and other empirical trust researchers reviewed in previous chapters appear to assume a degree socio-cultural homogeneity among their sample populations (cf. Robinson, 1996; Bijlsma & Van de Bunt, 2003; Tzafrir, 2005). Some variation appeared in the Herriot et al (1997) and Atkinson (2007) papers, where an attempt was made to replicate the perceived organisation hierarchy into the design and thereby an assumption about diverse perspectives shaped by diverse (conflictual?) work cultures: i.e. ‘management’ and ‘workers’ – a drawing together of perspectives that might be termed particularly British!

373 of the 420 employees participating in this current study use English as a second or other language. Inviting these IEs (as defined here) to attribute meanings to the phrase 'trust in the psychological contract' is to challenge pre-set meanings attributed by researchers. Furthermore, doing so might help them understand their own established and / or preferred patterns of attributing meaning to the process and outcomes of the employment relationship: i.e. cause them to reflect and translate to their own professional experience and (potentially) expressing and developing the learning and flexibility elements of what has been defined here as the 'global mindset'.

4.5 The 'locus of control'

The distinction that might be made between 'skills' and 'competencies' was highlighted earlier in this discussion. Drawing freely on insights from Liz Lee-Kelly's research in this field (above), skill elements can be discerned in process statements such as 'questioning the structure of problems as they stand' (cf. Lee-Kelley, 2006). To achieve such outcomes IEs (like students of management) can be trained in processes of problem solving, including (for example) 'lateral and vertical thinking skills' (De Bono, 1971). This skill element can be compared to a related 'control' competency – a propensity to challenge the boundaries of what is currently accepted as 'normal' commonly attributed by developmental psychologists to young people – and subsequently young professionals - identified as 'gifted' or 'talented' (cf. Albert, 1978, 1990). The global mindset, as with the international experience and / or aspiration attributed in this discussion to IEs, appears to imply that members of a particular group or (in marketing terms) international *segment* of employees might harbour and / or be willing and able to demonstrate a competency and confidence to question what their peers, other 'in-group' members and (not least) their superiors and established researchers might consider expected or indeed 'normal' when invited to attribute meanings to the phrase 'trust in the psychological contract'.

In the context of the current discussion this insight is important for at least three reasons. Firstly it adds empirical and research-based substance to what might

still appear as just another IHRM 'buzz phrase': i.e. the *international* and now *global mindset*. As mentioned above, one established source of support comes from the field of developmental psychology and studies into identity building among 'gifted' children (cf. Erikson, 1968). These studies offer distinctive profiles of (for example) musically talented young people: they tend to appear more willing than their contemporaries to develop an independent perspective on a problem or task. A key insight here is that talented people so defined appear more ready to assume a 'locus of control' over the definition and execution of the task rather than expect or wait for 'expert' help. They appear able to focus on solving a problem, and this despite the distraction of peripheral noise generated by the pronounced interests – or even advice - of other people. Further studies suggest how talented young people appear to develop these qualities and problem-solving skills over time and convert these in sum to a personalised strategy for coping with life, thereby achieving a level of 'strategic consistency' that, from an IHRM perspective, might be translated into the type of 'talented' employee an organisation would look to recruit (cf. Cappelli, 2008). From the individual employee perspective this 'locus of control' propensity and (when applied) *competency* might readily translate into an approach to work and to the individual development of a career (Jackson, 2010b:211).

Secondly, IEs who harbour the skill / competency combination highlighted above appear to be precisely the type of respondent an IHRM researcher should be looking to meet and work with, and particular where the objective is framed in terms of 'challenging' the current location of trust in the psychological contract (cf. *Figure 1*). In addition, assuming there is the real possibility to meet and work with such talented IEs then their participation might be expected to be perceived (potentially) as rewarding for them also, prompting their curiosity as they develop and transfer to a defined research context combined skills of problem solving and competencies related to personal and professional growth.

Thirdly, and in tandem with this second reason, the 'locus of control' skill / competency element highlighted in the concept of the global mindset might guide the design of empirical trust and psychological contract research, such that the researcher involved might consider what they could bring to the research

process and to the ongoing researcher-researchee relationship. This latter suggestion reconnects with the vital link to performance (cf. Sparrow, 2008) and raises the question of how – or whether – empirical researchers might assess their own performance as trust researchers. Interpreting the global mindset in terms of demonstrable skills and competencies allows for this form of formal and informal assessment (Jackson:2010b) – an insight that becomes formalised as a key assumption underpinning the preliminary studies detailed in chapter five.

4.6 Nationality

Having located the term ‘international employee’ in current contexts for IM, CCM and IHRM research, and given that ‘nationality’ is embedded in the concept of the IE, attention now turns to the question of whether nationality as a research variable is relevant. Reference to the ‘global mindset’ and to ‘talent’ suggests that emphasising nationality might not add much value to this research: i.e. in terms of explaining or predicting the meanings IEs individually might attribute to trust in the psychological contract.

Researching contexts for cross-border trust building

Child and Möllering designed a study designed to develop ‘conceptual and empirical understanding of organizational trust’ (2003:69). The authors describe their empirical research context as a ‘cross-border’ rather than ‘international’ because it entails examining in empirical terms how and why managers and their organisations based in Hong Kong perceive risk in their negotiations with mainland Chinese business partners and staff ‘local’ to geographic areas beyond the border of the Hong Kong ‘Special Administrative Region’ (Hong Kong SAR). The authors state in their introduction: ‘China provides a distinctive context for research on trust, testing the limits of theories emanating from modern Western societies’ (2003:69).

The ‘western’ theories or concepts that the authors work with include ‘contextual confidence’, as defined by Luhmann (1979, 1988), and ‘active trust

development' (Giddens, 1991). Niklas Luhmann's concept of contextual confidence in relation to trust was discussed in chapter two, while Anthony Giddens' (1991) concept of 'active trust' appears highly relevant in preparation for the preliminary studies described in chapter five. Developing 'active trust involves achieving critical insight and balance between what is assumed (e.g. routine) between trustor and trustee and what is 'worked at' or 'won' (Giddens, 1991:96). Working to a routine might be interpreted as working towards familiarisation, while working at building and sustaining a relationship might be interpreted in scholarly terms as structuration.

It has been suggested already how the relationship described in the psychological contract might stand as model for how the researcher-researchee relationship might develop. The 'structure' of *Figure 1* suggests a routine that becomes destabilised when the relationship between the parties reaches a 'crisis point': e.g. when the content of the contract becomes perceived as suddenly and significantly 'unfamiliar' (e.g. disrupted or 'breached') and the 'consequences' thereby suddenly or significantly uncertain. Echoing Luhmann (1988), when international business people become uncertain of whom to trust, they seek confidence in context-giving factors such as regulatory or law enforcing institutions in order to reduce their perception and calculation of risk.

Child and Möllering draw on Zucker (1986) to explain how the context for developing cross-border relationships between Hong Kong and 'the Mainland' is differentiated in economic and legal terms. As with the Fukuyama (1995) text Zucker takes the USA as the benchmark for advanced industrialisation and concomitant institutional development. Firstly, between Hong Kong and Mainland China two currencies form part of the exchange. Furthermore, the exchange proceeds across two still distinct regulatory and law-enforcement environments, as evinced in the types of institutions established and emerging that serve to give the context for business relationships to start and develop, thereby standing as institutional points of reference within which different actors might express different levels of contextual confidence. In short, these institutions provide the contexts within and across which goods, services, knowledge and experience might be transferred and exchanged; the contexts

within which business people calculate risk and, by extension, render themselves vulnerable to disappointment (Luhmann, 1988). Fundamentally, in negotiating the relatively familiar and relatively unfamiliar, choices of what or whom to trust, when, for how long, with what, and why, are essentially *strategic* (Hardin, 1991).

The cross-border experience of moving from familiar to less familiar is reinforced also at the level of individual perception and experience. Travelling between Hong Kong SAR and Mainland China requires crossing a frontier post with an immigration and customs control. Drivers from Hong Kong need suddenly to drive on the right-hand side of the road: their cars need to be carrying a second set of licence plates; the drivers need separate road tax and insurance documentation – given the costs involved, only a select minority of cross-border Chinese business people can comply with such requirements.

One striking feature of the Child and Möllering (2003) study is that nationality or perceived cultural / ethnic identity does not appear to be a significant factor in how the Hong Kong-based managers / firms chose to engage in active trust with their Mainland counterparts. Rather, the authors found that the extent to which Hong Kong managers expressed ‘confidence in China’s institutional context’ had ‘a strong positive association with trust in the local staff working within that context’ (2003:69): in other words, context before people and confidence before trust when assessing the riskiness of initiating a trust-based cross-border business relationship. One conclusion from this study is that a shared ethnicity did not appear to render the ‘unfamiliar’ sufficiently ‘familiar’ such that the Hong Kong managers were willing to pursue an ‘active trust’ strategy *in lieu* of ascertaining the institutional context for their investment; nor did a shared language (Mandarin); nor, in strict political terms, did a shared nationality.

Both the research process and the findings it generates can be interpreted as highly context-specific: hence the emphasis given to contextual confidence as a key factor determining cross-border processes of inter-organisational and (the current research focus) interpersonal trust building. Child and Möllering (2003) support their conclusions with empirical data generated from a series of focus

group meetings, detailed questionnaire surveys (in both English and Chinese) and follow-up interviews with around 615 individual respondents. It is instructive to note here how the authors generalise from their micro- survey data generated primarily among a select sample of Hong Kong based managers to the more macro conclusion and claim that their survey data illustrate how a sample of '615 Hong Kong firms' (my emphasis) express a higher degree of interpersonal trust in local Chinese staff. Co-author John Child similarly adopts this approach towards emphasising the strategic significance of empirical research findings when he discusses 'the key role that mutual trust plays in the success of international alliances and projects' (2001:274) with a number of senior executives. Their individual views become attributed to the organisations they work for, thus suggesting (for the purposes of this current study) that individual employees are likely to perceive 'the organisation' as synonymous with senior managers and the decisions the impact they personally appear to exert on the individual employee's experience of the contract. Proximics in terms of management communications and individual perceptions of distance will play a role here (cf. Jandt, 2010). In a small or medium-sized family owned and led businesses, for example, 'the organisation' of *Figure 1* might well be identifiable as one individual: the head of the family and company 'president'. In a globally distributed MNC, however, 'the organisation' might be identified more in relation to the global HRM policies emanating out of HQ and translated locally into IHRM practice, thus becoming interpreted and perceived as a 'cause' factor in IE experiences of the psychological contract.

Overall, the Child and Möllering (2003) paper offers a rich source of guidance in the preparation for the preliminary studies presented in chapter five. For example, the type of 'international employee perspective' explored here might be defined less by the colour of the passport the individual respondent holds or the side of the road they routinely drive on in the home context for employment. Rather the 'international' tag might be applied to how they appear to draw on international experience and / or career ambition as they perceive and calculate the risk of investing in trust-based relationships. As such the question of IE

nationality might *emerge* to significance – a suggestion tested empirically in chapter five.

National culture as context for researching benevolence

According to Rousseau et al (1998:395) trust is 'a psychological state' prompted by 'positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another': 'expectations' stand as a 'cause' element in *Figure 1* and suggest (conceptually, at least) a pathway along which one or other party might attempt to manage the course of the relationship. Echoing Bijlsma and Van de Bunt (2003), eliciting would-be trustor perceptions and expectations might shed light on 'antecedents to trust'. Echoing Doney et al: 'there is a growing need to understand how culture and trust interact' (1998:617). Having accepted nationality as a key variable – *initially* - it is as well to explore the extent to which national culture might influence the perceptions and expectations that IEs might have of each other. For, in contexts for CCM or intercultural communication both parties should recognise that they 'cannot expect to force-fit members of another culture into his or her own cultural norms. They cannot easily be made to accept his or her perceptions of reality' (Mead, 2005:16).

As illustrated in *Figure 2* 'benevolence' forms one of the three core elements of 'ABI'. In terms of semantic association it appears readily to connect with the vulnerability condition for trust (Banerjee et al, 2006). From an employee (trustor) perspective a 'benevolent' employer (trustee) is one who appears intentionally to avoid opportunistic behaviour, notably behaviour that might harm or disadvantage the (usually less powerful) trustor party to the relationship (cf. Robinson, 1996).

A study by Tan and Chee (2005) explores the extent to which a social cultural context defined as 'Confucian' might generate local variations on meanings attributed to ABI. The benevolence concept appears in Confucian philosophy as 仁 (*ren*) and expresses the essence of being a humane and socially responsible human being. Using semi-structured interviews with seventeen ethnic Chinese entrepreneurs in Singapore they concluded that members of 'Confucian cultures'

give emphasis to *affective* factors in their perceptions of other people's trustworthiness, as shaped by attributed qualities such as openness and frequency of contact at work and 'also in the informal social occasions such as family function' (Tan & Chee, 2005:206). As highlighted above, one distinguishing feature separating HRM and IHRM is the insight that IHRM practitioners find themselves more involved in an IE's family matters (Briscoe et al, 2009), a consideration highlighted starkly in relation to contracts with expatriates (Fay, 2010c) and, consequently, a factor determining the success of expatriate assignments (cf. Harzing, 2002).

Hwee Hoon Tan of the aforementioned Tan and Chee (2005) paper subsequently collaborated with Turkish colleagues Wasti and Eser to research Tan et al (2007). Having thus broadened the cultural diversity of the research Tan et al are in a stronger position to emphasise an emic ('culture group insider looking in') approach to research in order to elicit and compare 'local' understandings of trust and perceptions of trustworthiness, and subsequently compare these to the type of 'etic' ('outsider looking in') research models and interpretations – in this case Hofstede (1980), Mayer et al (1995), and Doney et al (1998). Applying the ABI model and incorporating an approach popularised by Brislin (1980), Tan and her team employed research assistants to 'back translate' the ABI concepts from English to Turkish to Chinese and then back to English, thus balancing diversity of interpretation with standardisation of data generation and analysis. The purpose here was to establish the emic credentials of the model before applying it. They interviewed thirty Chinese and thirty Turkish employees across 'several large organisations' in Turkey and China. As in Atkinson (2007) interviewees were asked to recall 'critical incidents' defining their relationship with superiors and / or subordinates at work. The testimony was recorded verbatim; research assistants back translated the transcriptions in order to identify conceptual (ABI) patterns of discourse. In a key finding Tan et al (2007) identify 'benevolence' as the ABI dimension that attracts most universal (i.e. etic) attention and validity. Through the back-translation process Chinese respondents collocated benevolence to 'humility' and 'closeness' while Turkish respondents emphasised perceptions of emotional support, empathy, unselfish

behaviour, and 'contribution to team spirit'. The authors suggest this reflects the culture of Turkish organisations, characterised as 'paternalistic' and where bosses routinely feel obliged to get involved in the family life of subordinates (Tan et al, 2007:23). Chinese subordinates looked to their superiors to give open and critical help and guidance, whereas a more 'top-down' expectation was that employees should share information selflessly and preserve harmony by avoiding open conflict. On this note their data coding in respect of trust is uniformly positive: e.g. they do not elicit perceptions of perceived 'untrustworthiness' – a limitation admitted subsequently by the creators of ABI (Schoorman et al, 2007). Tan et al (2007) subsequently appeared as Wasti et al (2010), where the authors specified the cities of Istanbul and Shenzhen as the location of their two national cultural samples - locations revisited in this current study.

4.7 Comparing the expectations of western and Asian employees

The work of Paul Sparrow and others has served to keep the psychological contract at the forefront of European HRM research (cf. Sparrow & Hiltrop, 1994). To illustrate, reference to a 'psychologischer Arbeitsvertrag' is established in German language research and practice. For example, Raeder & Grote (2005) interviewed sixty-four HRM practitioners across fourteen Swiss organisations about what they expected from upwardly mobile employees or 'talent'. Their research highlighted: *loyalty* as in 'identifying with the organisation and its objectives'; *performance* in terms of an entrepreneurial attitude and a willingness to take responsibility for work processes and outcomes; *respect* for 'the rules' and for 'the customer'; and *flexibility* in terms of 'geographical mobility, work time allocation and shifting of task responsibilities and roles'. It could be argued that this research 'shopping list' resonates with HRM practitioners worldwide and may, indeed, represent no more than an attempt by such practitioners to measure themselves against their peers while balancing attention to the expressed or perceived expectations of employers and / or other powerful stakeholders. The promissory and obligatory connotations associated

with conceptualisations of 'loyalty' thus remain firmly established as a major focus for international contract research (cf. Turnley & Feldman, 1999 – *reviewed below*)

As highlighted in chapter three the vast bulk of western research into the psychological contract focuses on perceptions of contract breach or violation (Conway & Briner, 2007). To illustrate, research conducted in France by Delobbe et al (2005) identify how international research into the role of trust (*confiance*) in perceptions of contract breach (*brèche*) has made little progress since the pioneering research by Robinson (1995, 1996) and Robinson and Morrison (2000) – an insight echoing contract research in Italy in respect of the *rottura* (breach) phenomenon (De Carlo et al, 2010). Given the then (and ongoing!) turbulence in international markets for professional employment Delobbe et al (2005) look with difficulty for Europe-based research evidence about how affective perception might inform employee decisions to quit. Here they connect with influential studies developed in the USA by Turnley and Feldman, (1999, 2000). Turnley and Feldman (1999) posited a model for predicting four types of employee reactions to perceived contract violation; namely, *exit*, *voice*, *loyalty*, and *neglect* - hence subsequent reference to an 'EVLN' model. They find 'exit' to be 'the most consistently predicted of the four responses' (1999:917) - unsurprisingly, perhaps; for when an employee quits the effect can be observed relatively unambiguously. Without explicitly exploring trust as a variable the researchers find that employee perceptions of inequity lead to employee 'mistrust' and thus predictably to 'exit' (1999:899). One key situational variable in this progression is adjudged to be 'organisational climate' including employee perceptions of opportunities to express 'voice'. Taking 'exit' as the ultimate expression of the perceived 'brèche' of a contract – if not a relationship – then alternative and perhaps preceding reactions include 'voice', as in employees taking verbalised steps to highlight perceived difficulties in the relationship. To accommodate these steps and postpone exit employers might design channels for employee feedback. Another possible employee response is 'loyalty' or the inferred and / or elicited degree to which an employee commits to stay with the organisation. Fourthly there is 'neglect', whereby employees deliberately reduce

their professional attention to work, thus impacting on organisational performance.

As demonstrated by Tan et al (2007) relocating 'western' management models concepts to 'eastern' contexts for research can serve to highlight gaps in 'western' understandings of shifts in culture-specific expectations and, by extension, in global markets for employment and individual career aspirations. Steven Si and colleagues (2009) offer a striking emic example by re-applying the EVLN model 'in the Chinese context'. They state (2009:166) quite clearly how:

- *According to traditional Chinese culture, a firm, which was generally family run, has such strong trust among its members that it seldom needed a contract to control them.*

However, even Chinese family-run firms run along Confucian principles are now having to compete in an increasingly professionalised and socially mobile market for talented managers across China (cf. Sun et al, 2007; Ngo et al, 2008). Correspondingly, Si et al (2009) achieve two striking sets of insights occur in relation to the organisation of the sampling processes and the emphasis given to 'neglect' and 'voice'. To compare: Turnley and Feldman (1999) surveyed 804 'mid-career employees' with an average age of 35; in contrast, Si et al (2009) use their sampling decisions to identify an emergent 'class' of employees in China: namely, 'managers' as opposed to (general) 'workers'. They do this in order to diversify the established notion of the 'employee perspective' on the contract. In fact Si et al (2009) refer to an 'organization-manager psychological contract' because 'a manager is obviously (*sic*) in a more powerful position than a general employee, a manager must take on higher responsibilities, obligations, expectations and requirements' (2009:165). As such these manager/ employees harbour expectations of an increased 'voice' in how their contract is both negotiated and interpreted: e.g. in terms of its relational or transactional emphasis (cf. *Table 1* in chapter three).

Attracting the participation of 524 entry and mid-level managers (no age specified) from across five Chinese cities - Si used MBA students from Shanghai to survey the respondents - a Likert-type 5-scale questionnaire was used to elicit how these managers perceive their current employers to be fulfilling contractual

'obligations'. Where negative perceptions were reported Si et al expected to find evidence for an increase in 'neglect', and notably in contexts where managers believed to be negotiating a transactional as opposed to a relational-type contract (cf. *Table 1*). Where the manager believed to be negotiating a relational type contract then 'that manager is most likely to try to improve the relationship actively by working harder' (Si et al, 2009:172) whereas – according to Turnley and Feldman (1999) - a US American counterpart could have been expected to engage in 'destructive' behaviours: i.e. *increased* neglect. The pull of traditional trust-based employment relationships in China appears to be expressed here, although in such situations Si et al emphasise how these relationally disappointed managers also would prefer more space and time to express their individual 'voice' (cf. Marchington et al 2001 – *not cited in Si et al*). As a research limitation Si et al (2009:172) recognise that there is a 'time lag between a manager's perceptions ... (of violations) ... and resultant changes in that manager's behaviour'. Echoing McAllister (1995), they are unable to apply causality to the cross-sectional survey data in order to explain this striking result.

Psychological contract research in Asia

According to Si et al (2009:166)

- *The idea of the psychological contract has come as an entirely new concept learned from Western human resource management; it was perceived from the start as foreign, and interacted in largely negative ways with ways the mutual trust-based relationships native to Chinese culture.*

This claim appears to be valid. For when prompted or influenced by 'western' academic discourse expectations, Chinese scholars appear willing to explore 'eastern' interpretations of 'content' and 'consequence' elements of the psychological contract (Malcolm Warner, 2010 – *personal communication*): the Si et al (2009) paper is one such example. More typical is, for example, Fang Lee Cooke's in-depth study of 'HRM, Work and Employment in China' (2005), where detailed reference is given to evolving 'employment relationships' but only scant reference to a 'psychological contract'.

In contexts for HRM research in Asia it appears to be non-Asian co-authors (and editors such as Warner) who tend to make references to the contract detailed and explicit (cf. Torrington et al, 1994; Jackson & Tomioka, 2004; Sparrow, 2008). For example, Stone (2009) systematically develops 'an Asian perspective' on HRM, making explicit reference to psychological contracts and to the 'erosion of trust' that might serve to undermine employee experiences of these (2009:368). Interestingly, Stone connects directly with the emerging business agenda for trust research: e.g. in contexts for e-commerce and for international and virtual team working. Here Stone defines 'trust' in business performance terms as 'a measure of how willing employees are to share information, cooperate with one another and not take advantage of each other' (2009:409).

Geographical proximity on top of a rapidly developing international business and trade interconnectedness might explain why 'western' scholars based in Australia appear more open to exploring the applicability of western HRM concepts such as the psychological contract in Chinese and other Asian contexts. To illustrate, while exploring 'advances' in HRM in Asia Kidd et al (2001) develop an Australian perspective on what appears to be the 'opaque' operation and 'spinning of networks' that serve to distinguish overseas Chinese (*huaqiao*) businesses in East and Southeast Asia, highlighting examples from Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan, where the 'Chinese Family Business' (CFB) model (cf. Mead, 1998, 2005) continues to form the bedrock of successful economies such as Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong SAR (cf. Ambler & Witzel, 2000, Ambler et al, 2009). The CFB model has long been accepted as a successful model for business organisation in the history of global commerce (Redding, 1990).

Similar trends in employee expectation have been observed in Japan, where employees whom market demand designates as 'talented' tend to 'welcome HRM systems that explicitly recognize individual achievement, rationalization and efficiency' (cf. Jackson & Debroux, 2009:187). Furthermore, they no longer automatically 'perceive their employers as benevolent' and as a consequence 'do not expect them to be so' (Debroux, 2010:87). In Japan currently there is a debate about the extent to which 'the need' perceived by scholars 'for a new kind of psychological contract' (Debroux, 2010:86) comes as a result of employee

expectations converging with the more transactional type of contract attributed by Japanese HRM researchers and practitioners to a US American model or whether it is a national hybrid form: i.e. in the context of this current discussion, what might represent an ‘international employee’- type expectation. The debate is ongoing, as in the debate about what type of contracts career-minded female employees in Japan might expect be expecting to negotiate (cf. Jackson & Tomioka, 2004).

4.8 An ethnographic approach to trust research (*se-ken*)

According to Seligman, ‘trust is something that enters into social relations when there is role negotiability (across) the “open spaces” of roles and role expectations’ (1997:24-5). Reference has been made several times already in this study to the conceptualisation of linking trust and individual employee identity developed by Tomoko Kurihara (2006). This linkage can be expressed by combining to originally Chinese concepts thus: (世間). Read as *se-ken* these two characters (Japanese *kanji*) denote ‘world’ and ‘space in between’, also ‘gateway’, and together they signify ‘society’ or ‘the world at large’ (Kurihara, 2006:49). To enter and participate in the (uncertain) ‘world at large’, individuals need trust.

A graduate in Social Anthropology from SOAS: University of London, Kurihara has become recognised internationally as a consultant in organisational psychology and behaviour. Her worked interpretation of *se-ken* derives from an ethnographic study she conducted as an employee in a traditional *kaisha* in Osaka, Japan. The organisation and the members she interacted with each day formed her experience of *se-ken* in that she and they created the appearance of the total network of social relationships that surround each individual. This interaction might be formalised in spoken and written language. However it also proceeds in the form of informal and often unintentional gestures and encounters – a sum of interrelations resulting from an accumulation of actions and interactions between members of various sub-networks, separated and joined by time-space intervals Kurihara terms *aidagara* or ‘space in between’. Echoing Geertz (1973:390), ‘each partner participates in the onrolling life of the

other', thereby helping each other make sense of their shared passage through time-space(s) and the sub-cultures generated within and across them. Experiences and expectations associated with *trusting* become equated to moving and sense making through these shared intervals of time-space.

As highlighted in chapter two Baier (1983) suggests that for historical, epistemological and social-cultural reasons women learn how to trust differently than men. One vivid illustration of this claim might be evinced in Kurihara's accounts of *aidagara*, as when she writes of being aware of the kind of ripple effect she created – and responded to – as she walked across a typically Japanese open plan office. She reflected at the time and subsequently that her choice of dress (colourful rather than the sober traditional for female employees) and 'page boy' hairstyle (highly unusual in Japanese *kaisha*) had over a short space and time begun to intrigue and / or grate with several of her work colleagues. She reflected on some of her multiple identities, as reflected what she inferred were the attributed perceptions of her colleagues: Japanese, *kaisha-in* (company employee), female, mid-twenties, unmarried, striding towards completion of an office task, a favourite perhaps of some senior (male) bosses, striding towards a future different to that of other employees, confident, well-heeled - arrogant? One reading of the text suggests an ethnographic researcher seeking to express her preferred 'truth' about human society, reminiscent of the controversy that subsequently cast a shadow over Margaret Mead's achievements (Mead, 1972) and, as suggested in chapter two, might yet cloud Fukuyama's work on trust.

One indication of *se-ken's* omnipresence is the pressure that individual's perceive towards aligning their norms and values to those apparently promoted by 'significant others': Kurihara (2006:220) suggests metaphorically that *se-ken* has 'its own eyes, ears and mouth'. In Japan as in other societies influenced by Confucian values, individuals traditionally seek reflected identity in a groups formed during schooling and early employment: *uchi no doki* or simply *doki* – 'our peer- / age-specific group' (cf. Dore & Sako, 1998; Iida, 2002; Jackson & Tomioka, 2004). This is a socio-cultural group that commenced an institutionalised relationship simultaneously. Controversially (I think) Kurihara does not admit to her work colleagues – the co-actors in her ethnographic

research – that she is conducting a research project: she does not allow them an informed ‘voice’. Hence all her context-specific interpretations of *se-ken* are biased in her favour. In more practical terms Kurihara did not explain to her work colleagues that she had received the opportunity to conduct this research because a member of her family had connections to senior management at the organisation. Nonetheless, the Kurihara (2006) study illustrates some of the rich data and insights that ethnographic research might uncover. It also illustrates one of the core dilemmas of empirical trust research: in order to achieve unbiased participation from research subjects researchers might choose to hide their true intentions, as making these explicit will distort the interactive ‘ripple effect’ illustrated above. There is also the practical research problem of access: i.e. finding a ‘time-space’ context that affords confidence to research respondents and within which a mutually beneficial research relationship might develop.

Echoing Schütz (1970), each member of an associate relationship responds to whatever is observable of the other, including gesture, gait, and facial expressions – a key collective attribute of the aforementioned *doki* as with other groups defined as socially enmeshed subcultures (cf. Jandt, 2010). These are meaningful and impressive not only as events. Rather, they express a physiognomic meaning that serves to communicate and share another group member’s enacted thoughts. Consequently, one ‘problem of social reality’ that both conceptual and empirical trust researchers need to negotiate as they share it is the extent which their own observations can be relied on to be valid representations of other people’s attitudes, experiences and expectations: e.g. in relation to trust and the trusting attitudes and behaviours attributed both to the self (as observer) and to others in their role as the observed. This question of research validity applies to Kurihara’s reflectively charged progression through an open plan office. This question holds true also for interpretations of employee expectations and intentions based on the type of ‘snapshot’ view generated by cross-sectional surveys, as confirmed by both McAllister (1995) and Si et al (2009). Such ‘fly-by-night’ research interventions combined with fleeting observations of employee responses provide a shaky premise upon which to explain causality or predict the shape of future research observations of human

trusting behaviour. Consequently, and echoing Denzin (2007), a mixed of research methods might be preferable if something validly resembling 'an international employee perspective' on trust in the psychological contract is to emerge.

4.9 Summary

As this discussion moves towards detailing the preliminary and primary studies of Parts Two and Three, a number of conceptual and practical design recommendations have emerged. In order to gain access to a convenience sample of international employees who might harbour what has been termed here an international or global mindset, where should the empirical and ethnographic researcher look? Drawing on the literature reviewed in the chapters thus far, multi-national corporations (MNCs), business schools and programmes of executive training appear appropriate. In terms of pre-set variables for data generation and analysis, respondent nationality appears to remain a standard point of reference. And given the emphasis developed in this current chapter to individual employee experiences and expectations of international and perhaps global career development, age interpreted as a stage in an ongoing career trajectory might also add value. As the IM, IHRM and CCM literature suggests, choosing to target and work with international employees and, through them, seek to develop 'an international employee perspective' on 'trust in the psychological contract' suggests designing and giving context(s) for a researcher-researchee interaction that looks beyond an initial (e.g. cross-sectional) T1 phase of data gathering. Rather, it suggests moving beyond this stage. Nonetheless, and as McKnight and Chervany (2006) state: each relationship begins somewhere. Consequently, the initial researcher-researchee interaction might serve by design only to initiate and anchor the research relationship. Out of respect, the research topic might be made explicit; in pursuit of valid and differentiated data, time and space might be allowed for the expression and development of individual employee / researchee voice. This is the approach rehearsed now in Part Two.

Part Two: Preliminary Studies and research design

The discussion in the following two chapters develops on the theme of 'first encounters' established in Part One. In chapter five there is an attempt temporally to 'anchor' the research relationship with respondents and other stakeholders through a series of preliminary studies – each one designed to encourage respondent voice. The lessons learned during the preliminary studies are formalised in the research design detailed in chapter six.

Chapter 5: Eliciting international employee perspectives on trust

To learn something and at times to practise it – surely that is a pleasure?

Confucius (*Analects* 1.1)

5.0 Introduction

The purpose of the discussion in this chapter is to invite multiple research stakeholder perspectives on trust as a research concept relevant to contexts for international employment and individual career development. This invitation is given context by a series of preliminary studies. These represent a more detailed independent mapping of a complex research terrain - now more familiar after the literature reviews of Part One. These preliminary studies offer an opportunity to rehearse research methods designed to initiate and anchor the researcher-researchee relationship. Echoing Confucius (cited above), conducting and reflecting on these studies offers researchers an opportunity to practise and learn.

5.1 Triangulation

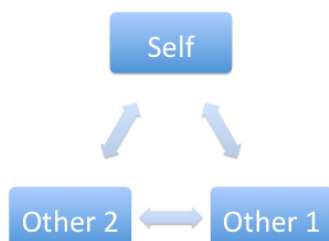
Triangulation is a key element in any process of socially oriented research. Fitting with the exploratory intent of this study, 'triangulation' is a concept with its roots in sea and land surveying. It is a process whereby explorers attempt to fix their geographical position in relation to (preferably) two known points on-shore and another from the shifting yet predictable positions of the sun, stars or horizon (Ingham, 1975:35). Triangulation gives social research direction and lends it the status of a science (cf. Denzin, 2007).

Researcher identity

One compelling outcome of conducting preliminary studies concerns a researcher's quest for a credible research identity, identified as 'Self' in *Figure 5* below. Trust is assumed to be an integral and vital experience in the negotiation

of individual and social identity (cf. Giddens, 1991; Kurihara, 2006). Becoming a 'researcher' assumes a distinct social identity (cf. Rapport & Overing, 2000).

Figure 5: *The research triangulation process*



Source: *own design*

By working to processes of triangulation the researcher learns that neither the 'self' nor 'the other' alone is sufficiently reliable as a source of data or research insight. There is a performance element to triangulation: *effective* researchers are likely to be those whom research respondents perceive as credible and trustworthy - a measure of research performance ultimately embedded into the research design detailed in chapter six.

Primary data

The primary data presented in this chapter derive from initial interaction with samples of research respondents and other stakeholders, identified above as 'Other 2'. The intended profile of these respondents as 'international employees' was outlined in chapter four. Eliciting the perspective of these 'IEs' aids triangulation by bringing fresh and diverse perspectives to the research process and thereby serves to correct researcher bias. This is relevant because the overarching purpose of developing a triangulated approach to social research is to locate some approximation of 'truth' about human experience (Gilbert, 1993). In *Figure 5* (above) whatever proves to be 'the truth' might be discerned somewhere dynamically *within* the triangle. This view connects with that developed eloquently by Möllering who locates his research definition of 'trust'

as somewhere '*between* reason, routine and reflexivity' (2006a:11 - *original emphasis*). Using a Buddhist-type wheel metaphor Möllering (2006a:100) emphasises the dynamic and fluid nature of trust as a socially harmonising phenomenon. He thus invokes a symbolic impact similar to that evoked by the *taegukki* or South Korean national flag, where the combination of elements suggests both a centrifugal tension and a centripetal harmony (*inhwa*) that serves both to assert the unity of the holistic middle of being human while simultaneously distinguishing this human centre from the fragmenting multi-directional push and pull of unequal and shifting forces of nature. As suggested in previous chapters, the unequal regulation of hierarchical relationships within and across societies, organisations and relationships forms an essentially Confucian conceptualisation.

However, such invocations assume that 'out-group' observers are cross-culturally sensitive enough to appreciate the iconography and symbolism at work in such images and metaphors (cf. Jandt, 2010): that they demonstrate characteristics of a 'global mindset' (cf. Briscoe et al, 2009; Steers et al, 2010). This lack of researcher knowledge or insight - initially, at least - creates uncertainty. Echoing Barnett (1990), making sense of uncertainty, challenging and exploring beyond ideology, and shedding critical light on claims to 'truth' is the overarching purpose of scholarly activity - a controversial claim in itself. Through conducting and reflecting on preliminary studies researchers can learn how to navigate gaps in knowledge and understanding along with other sources of controversy.

5.2 Measuring research performance

The discussion in chapter three gave consideration to how explicit and systematic reference to trust in the psychological contract might shed light on HRM practitioner performance e.g. the delegation of work and the retention of creative staff. A parallel process is considered here; for preliminary studies offer researchers an opportunity to develop a psychological contract with research respondents - including (potentially) trust - and experiment with an assembly of

fundamental building blocks fundamental to assessing researcher performance; notably: *reliability*, *validity* and *credibility*.

Reliability

Reliable research into trust sets out a position that, when triangulated by one researcher, might be adopted by another researcher concurrently or at some future point of time. Akin to a map that explorers might leave as legacy, 'a good level of reliability means that the research instrument produces the same data time after time on each occasion that it is used, and that any variation in results obtained through using the instrument is due entirely to variations of the thing being measured' (Denscombe, 2003:300). The phrase 'good level' expresses a value judgement about researcher performance. Echoing Pugh and Phillips (2006), perhaps a more precise indicator of researcher performance here would be 'convincing' or 'persuasive', as demonstrated in the eloquence of conceptual researchers such as Luhmann (1988) and Jones (1996).

Validity

Research is *valid* according to whether 'what is observed or measured is the same as what was purported to be observed or measured' (Robson, 2002:553). An operative term here is 'purported' and suggests developing a position that researchers should be prepared to challenge and defend – *convincingly* (Phillips & Pugh, 2006). The focus in this current study is on working with qualitative or interpretative data. Here, Miles and Huberman (1994) compare 'validity' to 'truth value' and the extent to which data-based findings 'make sense' and offer 'an authentic portrait of what we are looking at' (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 278). It is important that beholders do not become too impressed by demonstrations of 'clever' technique, nor by the reputation of the researcher / artist. For example, the iconic *Vitruvian Man* image attributed to Leonardo da Vinci has an ideally proportioned figure of 'man' perfectly contextualised by a geometric circle and square. The effect is inspirational, as was Leonardo's intention (Bramly, 1994). The image is reliable in that it might be copied. However, it fails

as a valid depiction of human relationships to science because, in strict geometric terms, it is 'something of a cheat' (Clark, 1969).

Just as portrait styles can vary, so researchers can construct diverse claims - and defences - for validity:

- *External validity* assumes that the findings and insights presented might be generalised beyond the specific research context (cf. Miles & Huberman, 1994)
- *Internal validity* assumes the data generated can support causal relationships (Kent et al, 2009) - a weakness identified in the cross-sectional survey approaches applied by McAllister (1995) and Robinson (1996).
- *Construct validity* assumes that the research instruments and approaches adopted for the study support critical scrutiny independently of the data they generate (Robson, 2002) - a claim posited by Schoorman et al (2007) on behalf of the ABI model.

Robson explains how triangulation is designed to 'help counter all threats to validity' (2002:175). These threats can be identified and resolved in technical terms - or even 'massaged' as in the Leonardo da Vinci example. Ultimately, and invoking Miles & Huberman (1994), it comes down to a decision by members of a critical audience of research stakeholders to trust or 'have faith' in the 'authenticity of the portrait': i.e. stakeholders that populate the audience identified in chapter one.

Credibility

If critical observers choose to trust a research design then it can be said to have gained 'credibility' (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Credibility originates in notions of belief (*credo*), connects with notions of *faith* (a 'belief in'), and thus invokes perceptions of *trustworthiness* as explored in Part One. As a research performance measure Hatch (2007:5084) considers 'trustworthiness' to be 'roughly equivalent to the concept of validity in traditional quantitative research'. Referring back to *Figure 5*, credibility suffers if only one perspective or point in the triangulation triangle is consistently emphasised; hence the common

reluctance to use 'I' (self) in much scientific research and the general preference to receive a 'professional' (*objective*) judgement rather than a 'personal' (subjective) opinion in matters of critical concern – as illustrated in chapter two, a convention challenged refreshingly by Jones (1996). Drawing on traditions of medical science the assumption in *Figure 5* is that the researcher (Self / 'I') can offer *judgements* that are balanced, credible, valid and / or reliable in their attention to objective evidence (cf. Ayto, 1990).

5.3 Preparing to initiate the research relationship

Repeated emphasis has been given this far in this discussion to human powers of *perception* – this as a response to its frequent invocation in the literature reviewed in Part One (cf. Atkinson, 2007; Yamagishi, 2005; Rousseau, 1989; Robinson, 1996; Mead, 2005; Tan et al, 2007). Explicit attention has been given to processes of human perception in contexts for dyadic interaction (cf. Mayer et al, 1995; Schoorman et al, 2007). Such are the enduring 'laws of gravity' (Ohmae, 2001): for social interaction needs to begin at a particular time and place; and as illustrated in *Figures 1* and *2*, how it is *perceived* to begin by the parties involved appears crucial to how it might subsequently develop into a research and (ideally) mutually trusting relationship.

Temporal anchoring

McKnight and Chervany (2006) – developing on McKnight et al (1998) – offer a useful model towards predicting and planning for this objective. It builds on a notion of 'temporal anchoring': 'almost every relationship begins with an initial phase' (McKnight & Chervany, 2006:29). One practical illustration from social life is the standard Japanese greeting between strangers: *hajimemashite*. The phrase derives from a verb form 'to begin'. Roughly translated the Japanese greeting equates to 'OK, we have begun'. However, it is important to emphasise the context for such interaction: i.e. the extent to which each party perceives the other *and* the context within which they first meet with confidence (cf. Luhmann,

1988; Child & Möllering, 2003). To illustrate, money is routinely exchanged between strangers engaged in business transactions. Echoing Simmel (1978) the face value accorded to the tangible banknote is subordinate to the value that each party attributes to the money and / or the service or product for which it is being exchanged: a context defined by reference to inferred institutional interests and visible presence. To illustrate, the 'Federal Reserve Note' banner on US dollar bills – with an 'In God We Trust' banner on the reverse side thrown in for added confidence. Although perceived as routine now - so routine that they are barely noticed - these signals contribute to a context defining how each party perceives the other: representatives of the US Federal Reserve are unlikely to be physically present to vouch for the dollar bills exchanged.

For the emphasis here must be on *perceiving* rather than on the more simplistic process of 'seeing', as highlighted in (for example) the Jones (1996) argument. Perceptions feed people's 'perspectives' in visual / sensual terms; also cognitively and affectively. Indeed, emphasising perception over (plain) seeing obviates a need for physical face-to-face interaction – a common occurrence now in e-commerce: i.e. the field in which the Harrison McKnight and his colleagues have begun to focus their research interests and the field of empirical trust research that consistently appears to attract most corporate funding (cf. Knights, 2001; McKnight & Chervany, 2001; McKnight & Choudhury, 2006; Xiao & Benbasat, 2003, 2007).

The McKnight and Chervany (2006) model then attempts to anchor the trust decision itself. This echoes the 'cause' leading to 'trust' evident in *Figure 1* and the Yamagishi (2005) model with its phase one invocation of 'trustfulness': the McKnight and Chervany model posits this phase as an initial 'disposition to trust'. The choice *initially* to trust or not trust someone or something is an iterative experience, a recurring 'fact' of social life (Luhmann, 1988): hence the significance of the feedback loop between 'outcome' and the ABI cluster in *Figure 2*. In their model McKnight and Chervany help distinguish between contexts for human-to-machine and human-to-human interaction: 'trusting stance' and 'faith in humanity'. Further invoking *Figure 2*, each form of initial interaction suggests a context for confidence and, where appropriate, for trusting decisions in context

of perceived and / or calculated risk. As Giddens (1991) suggests, a routine aspect of 'modern' identity is trusting selectively in strangers to achieve personal and professional ambitions. The 'frequent flyer' class of IEs identified by Steers et al (2010) routinely entrust their life to systems operated by air traffic controllers: people they probably never meet personally and in whom they need confidence in order to fly - confidence expressed as perception informed by the employee's prior experience or prejudice. In the 'frequent flyer' perception and experience these professionals remain like 'shadows' (Knights, 2001). Should the flight dramatically lose course, this confidence is likely to be shaken and in a psychological state of pronounced vulnerability the IE will look to build 'active trust' with the cabin crew as they visibly 'cross check manually' and give guidance to passengers: these crew members need rapidly to perform convincingly against each ABI factor, notably in terms of their perceived 'ability' or competence, individually and collectively. For as McKnight and Chervany (2006:43) emphasise, any initial trust building process is 'fragile'. Where trust might be built up, it might also be built down; or, according to time and circumstances, context and situation, even be perceived to 'collapse' (cf. Ring, 1996).

Working to stakeholder perceptions of trustworthiness

It is relevant here to combine notions of identity and of the 'global mindset' attributed to the IEs whose initial participation is fundamental to the effectiveness of the preliminary research effort. As highlighted in chapter four the initial interaction with them is expected to be shaped by sharing a 'way of viewing the world' that demonstrates (for example) a marked capacity to 'tolerate uncertainty', and a curiosity that drives them to seek out opportunities for learning in support of their own and others' personal and professional growth and development (Briscoe et al, 2009:218). Together these qualities or propensities express a 'need to know' type mindset that is flexible in terms of accommodating and 'sharing new insights' (Sparrow et al, 2004:105). This, at least, is the working assumption underpinning the respondent sampling and selection process initiated during these preliminary studies.

5.4 Reflexivity

As highlighted in chapter one McKnight and Chervany (1995) suggest that a first step towards exploring into the complex terrain of trust research is to invoke 'common language' definitions of 'trust'. Looking again at *Figure 5* (above) one similarly familiar place to embark on empirical trust research is with 'Self' in the person of the researcher him/herself.

Much social scientific research begins with reflective questions to oneself (Gilbert, 1993; Phillips & Pugh, 2006). This state and process of 'reflexivity' denotes a critical awareness 'of the ways in which the researcher as an individual with a particular social identity and background has an impact on the research process' (Robson, 2002:172). As such, reflexivity serves (potentially) to highlight the researcher's own bias and thus support an intention to develop the type of critical approach heralded in chapter one (cf. Western, 2008). Furthermore, engaging in reflexivity prepares researchers to work sensitively with other people's biases, as exemplified in the literature reviews and in the remarkable – and controversial - Kurihara (2006) study discussed in chapter four. In this sense developing a reflexive approach represents an ongoing ethnographic study: the researcher is continually asking questions of the 'Self' – a process of critical reflection expected of IEs also, as illustrated in reference to the 'locus of control' concept also highlighted in chapter four. Simultaneously, the researcher (if open) is continually responding to questions emanating from the 'Others' 1 and 2. To illustrate specifically from a trust researcher perspective:

- *A reflexive process (that) depends on ongoing interactions between actors. Such interactions may be started relatively blindly or accidentally, but then there is a possibility that they become self-reinforcing. Trust gradually undergoes gradual growth and transformation in the process of reflexive familiarization and structuration* (Möllering, 2006a:10)

Möllering goes on to invoke the concept of 'active trust' highlighted above (cf. Giddens, 1991; Child & Möllering, 2003). Echoing Luhmann (1988) and McAllister (1995), through reflection the initially unfamiliar might be rendered - visually, cognitively and affectively - more familiar and, on subsequent reflection, more *meaningful*. Assuming that sufficient time-space is designed into the

process of conducting preliminary studies, and with this sufficient time and space for the eliciting and expression of both respondent and researcher voice, there emerges an opportunity to practise and learn from such reflection.

Preliminary study 1

This study began during a process of reflection on the experience of a formal performance appraisal. My then line-manager and I had been trained simultaneously in a new appraisal procedure that we then enacted with our respective subordinates. My experience in the role as appraisee to her appraiser was disappointing. Retrospectively, my line manager appeared untrustworthy in that she appeared to lack competence and integrity. To illustrate, she acted against guidelines by talking so much that we 'ran out of time' before the concluding stage of the appraisal schedule: 'appraisee gives feedback to appraiser'.

Discussions with other appraisees (the 'Other 2' of triangulation) to this line-manager / appraiser evinced similar experiences of inappropriate time management: through shared reflection a pattern of incompetence (or insecurity?) arose. Finally, I was given the wrong forms to sign off - an institutional *faux pas*. Invoking ABI (*Figure 2*) benevolence did not appear to be an issue, as I did not feel particularly vulnerable in this situation, emboldened perhaps by the expectation (cf. *Figure 1*) that this particular line manager 'couldn't be trusted'; or, at least, 'trusted' to behave as she did.

Devoid of emotion this particular case appeared to evince a divergence in professional and / or personal values supporting what might be accepted as 'competence' and of 'integrity'. However, this superficial perception is anchored in the 'Self' source of triangulation with reference (retrospectively) to an 'other 1' source of triangulation: e.g. ABI and conceptualisations of the psychological contract. Soon after the appraisal I quit, thereby affirming the HRM truism that employees 'join companies and quit line-managers' (cf. Robinson & Morrison, 2000).

Research lessons learned

Such retrospective individualised accounts are unreliable except, perhaps, when video- or audio-recorded, or an impartial witness is present. The perspectives of informed and (potentially) more objective ‘others’ add substance and context to individual reflections. They also shape the discourse in a way that tends to remove the report of the event from the live nature of the event itself – an insight relevant to decisions about how or whether to record face-to-face interviews. In such contexts, the stakes tend to be heightened by affective and calculative linkages to each participant's expectation of reward and to their sense of ‘face’ and ‘professional pride’ (cf. Frowe, 2005). These linkages might well be universal and dealing with them openly invokes ABI-type measures of research trustworthiness. As events in the development of employment relationships, formal performance appraisals promise a rich source of data about people’s experiences and expectations of trust in the employment relationship and readily assume status as ‘critical incidents’ (cf. Atkinson, 2007). However, achieving external validity is a complex process because gaining access to ‘live’ rather than experimental (e.g. role-played) performance appraisals is problematic – a problem highlighted below.

5.5 The Japan study

Until the M.Phil. transfer stage, the working title of this study was:

- *Emerging values in International Human Resource Management: individualisation and the management of trust in the Japanese pharmaceutical industry*

HRM staff at a medium-sized and traditionally structured pharmaceutical manufacturer in Japan had offered research access during my involvement with them as an HRM consultant. With the support of key ‘gatekeepers’ I was invited to interview appraisees and appraisers about the expectations they brought to performance appraisals and, after the event, about their reflections on the same (cf. Hornsby-Smith, 1993; Robson, 2002). Unexpectedly, the gatekeepers withdrew their support during the process of being acquired by a rival. The

incoming head of HR decided that it was inappropriate to research trust among employees who might soon be released or reallocated. As a consequence, the original research design had to be revised, rendering a preliminary study out of what was intended to be a core study.

Methodology

The data generated by this fieldwork subsequently supported a parallel project, published as Jackson and Tomioka (2004). Eighty semi-structured interviews conducted in both English and Japanese. Echoing McAllister (1995) the data appeared to describe a pattern of shifting expectations among mid-career employees in Japan and thereby a potential re-conceptualisation of established psychological contracts, as highlighted in chapter four (cf. Jackson & Debroux, 2009; Debroux, 2010a). Sixty interviews were recorded by hand, the remainder using an MP3 player. Having a female Japanese industry insider as an assistant probably helped in terms of respondent perceptions of researcher credibility. Interviewees were nominated by HR professionals in the organisation or recruited externally by word-of-mouth. The age range of the sample - all Japanese and drawn from across business sectors - spanned thirty-five to forty-five: i.e. the type of mid-career professionals targeted by, for example, Atkinson (2007) and Si et al (2009) and targeted correspondingly in this current study also. Overall, the Japan study was designed to enhance western understanding on the emerging self-perception and identity of mid-career Japanese professionals (cf. Iida, 2002).

Context

One chapter in Jackson and Tomioka (2004) is entitled 'Losing trust?' In truth, 'trust' as a concept was not highlighted explicitly until the later rounds of interviews when respondents were allowed space to 'voice' themes they perceived as salient (cf. Marchington et al, 2001). The following extract puts the project into context:

- *The predominant expectation in Japanese organisational culture is that individuals will work long, hard and show sustained commitment towards co-operating with the work group and by extension help the organisation realise its strategic vision or objectives. The outcome for this effort is specified by senior managers, as they are expected to focus on the long-term strategic well being of the organisation and so should specify what rewards the organisation can or should afford at any one time (Jackson & Tomioka, 2004:159).*

In retrospect these early conceptualisations linking ‘commitment’ to ‘performance’ and ‘reward’ take new shape during the development of the literature reviews presented in Part Two. This insight emphasises the relative transience of temporal anchoring of research data and thus the necessarily iterative nature of literature reviews (cf. Saunders et al, 2000). To illustrate in re-connection to chapter four, since the 1970s studies of traditional Japanese-style HRM have tended to highlight the so-called ‘three treasures’, one of which is the expectation of lifetime employment, predominantly within one organisation (*kaisha*) and predominantly among male employees selected early on for a managerial track career - the stereotypical *salaryman* (cf. Usui, 2002). Reinforced by social stereotyping, the terms of the initial psychological contract become rather fixed (cf. Rousseau, 1990, 1993) and thus highly sensitive to perceptions of breach (cf. Debroux, 2010a). Testimony from a *salaryman* appears prominently in Part Three.

Trust

As Japanese manufacturing began to dominate many global business sectors during the 1980s, international management scholars attempted to discover how Japanese-style HRM ‘works’: William Ouchi (1981) - cited at the top of chapter four - was one such cross-culturally insightful scholar. Established western models were applied to explain the Japanese case: e.g. from theories ‘X’ and ‘Y’ (McGregor) through theories ‘T’ and ‘T+’ (Hofstede) to Ouchi’s ‘Theory Z’ (cf. Hofstede, 1993). It was Ouchi who early on highlighted ‘trust’ as the key to understanding Japanese-style HRM and the (alleged) ‘equitable outcomes’ it generates, contrasting this insight with what appeared to be an endemic emphasis in western management styles on ‘control’ and the type of materialistic

conceptualisations of loyalty highlighted in chapter three. The Handy (1993) 'trust-control dilemma' thus readily assumes a cross-cultural salience.

Ba

In promoting these analyses the focus appeared to be on understanding the major global competitors to western manufacturers, as evinced in an emerging - and enduring - scholar-practitioner obsession with the so-called Toyota Production System (TPS) and untranslated concepts such as *kaizen* or 'continuous improvement' - an approach to work that scholars claim might be embedded in post WW2 Japanese society as 'the modest acceptance that everyone has much to learn' (Dore & Sako, 1989:xix) and a feature subsequently exploited by Japanese management scholars with a nationalist agenda (cf. Philippe Debroux, 2006 - *personal communication*). Indeed, Takeuchi & Nonaka (2004), developing on Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), posit the intriguing concept of *ba* which they describe as a 'place' - which might be physical and virtual - designed by managers or innovation leaders for creating and sharing knowledge. It provides a forum for 'enhancing mutual trust among participants' (2004:56). They cite the development of the Toyota *Prius* as a product of *ba*. Introduced to market in 1997 and at a time when the business models enacted by automobile manufacturing giants such as Ford and GM were visibly crumbling, the *Prius* forcibly contradicts the confidence of US management scholars such as Paul Herbig (1995) who, invoking the occupation with baseball evident in both national populations, asserted 'innovation Japanese style' was designed for 'hitting singles' rather than 'going for home runs'.

Unusually for a traditional Japanese manufacturer the project team behind the *Prius* were instructed by project leaders to (for example) 'evaluate the new technology', regardless of professional background or 'speciality' and to 'think what is best for the product, instead of representing one's department's interests' and, in doing this, 'not care about one's age or rank' (Takeuchi & Nonaka, 2004:109): an invitation to think and act 'outside the box' easily transferable to current (re-)interpretations of *Figure 1*. In terms specific to this

current discussion *ba* might be understood as an operational ‘trust-control dilemma’ (chapter three) managed strategically in reference to the ‘locus of control’ propensity attributed to IEs in chapter four. Consequently, ‘domestic’ Japanese employees might be identified as ‘international’ in terms relevant to this current study.

Gender

A specific objective of this Japan study was to attract a fifty per cent female participation and thus connect with a nascent stream of gender- and diversity-oriented HRM research in Japan (cf. Watanabe, 1998; Renshaw, 1999; Usui, 2002; Yuasa, 2009). This objective demonstrates a clear - and justifiable - gender bias to research (cf. Baier, 1983; Kurihara, 2006). Relatively little western research attention has been given to where the majority of Japanese people actually work: i.e. in small and medium-sized enterprises all strategically vulnerable to decisions made in the boardrooms of large *kaisha* (cf. Dore & Sako, 1998; Jackson & Debroux, 2008a). Correspondingly, the role of Japanese women in work - let alone in management - has been routinely underestimated or even overlooked (cf. Renshaw, 1999, 2001; Macnaughtan, 2005; Yuasa, 2009). In some individual (albeit, still untypical) cases, this experience leads Japanese businesswomen and professionals to become ‘reluctant entrepreneurs’ (Debroux, 2010b) – a phenomenon visible also across Chinese business communities (cf. Cooke, 2009; Ng & Ng, 2009) and one where ‘age does not appear to make a difference’ (Chou et al, 2009:195). The lack of local understanding among western scholars has culminated in claims questioning the very *existence* of women in Japanese management (Hofstede, 1983). So here, retrospectively and in a spirit of redress, the gender bias evident in Jackson and Tomioka (2004) finds some measure of justification.

Trust and gender

In Japanese language the *kanji* representing ‘trust’ is similar to that in Chinese: 信 pronounced similarly as *shin*. This *kanji* commonly appears in the names that

banks and other financial service organisations award themselves - an insight that, after the recent global economic crises, illustrates how explicit marketing of 'trust' as reputation entails working with a 'fragile' commodity or experience (cf. McKnight & Chervany, 2006). In a benchmark discussion of Japanese HRM Kono and Clegg (2001:280) define 'trust' as:

- *Something built up over time and means that one can predict others' behaviour and expect that others will treat one well in difficult situations.*

In discourse terms a number of questions arise here, each relating to the type of research questions highlighted in chapter one:

- *How is this 'something' perceived and experienced? Does culture (as context) play a role here?*
- *Who decides which situations are 'difficult', how, and to what purpose? Does social status play a role here?*
- *Who determines what treating someone 'well' entails, and how? Does this represent a collective (in-group) or individual reward orientation?*
- *Noticing the plural apostrophe on 'others', how confident can any individual manager / researcher be of 'predicting' other people's (collective) behaviour? What role do individual and collective (in-group) perceptions of uncertainty play here?*

Answers to the latter question have been rehearsed in previous chapters, notably in respect of seeking to understand people's perceptions and responses to uncertainty and risk. In respect of reward expectations, since this current study began 'individualistic' calls for a clearer 'work-life balance' have become common in the discourse of Japanese HRM (cf. Debroux, 2003a; Jackson & Debroux, 2008b). In response to increasing uncertainty and an increasingly globalised economy female Japanese employees appear to be expressing increasingly 'international' propensities to be assertive and to challenge male-dominated expectations of what trust linked to rewards should mean (Watanabe, 1998; Iida, 2002; Philippe Debroux, 2007 – *personal communication*).

Consequently, one explicit theme in this Japan study became exploring a gender perspective on trust in the psychological contract. One purpose is to realise the

'wider variety of contracts' that connecting with a diversity research agenda might generate (Sparrow & Marchington, 1998:133). To illustrate, one of the more senior women managers in the Jackson and Tomioka (2004) survey explicitly raised the issue of 'trust':

- *There's no real incentive for female employees to trust their line-managers. Even if their direct report tells the higher ups about how good her performance is, there's little prospect that a woman employee will get much benefit from it*

This particular manager represents a rare talent in Japan. Aged forty-six and acting as the major breadwinner in her family, she consented to being 'headhunted' from her long-time Japanese employer to an international organisation in Japan, where she now leads a credit rating institution advising the Japanese government on health reform. Subsequently coded as 'J3', her further testimony is discussed in more detail in chapter eight.

International employee perspectives

Drawing on Mead (1998), the thesis that informed the production of Jackson and Tomioka (2004) was that the changing and emerging 'face' of Japanese management could be traced by shifts in 'self-esteem'. Individual managers - albeit of a mid-career generation and demonstrating competencies readily associated with an international or global mindset (Sparrow et al, 2004; Steers et al, 2010) - appeared prepared and able to assess their own market value, often in contradiction of established social and economic structures and institutions that appeared to distinguish Japanese society and culture, and notably as evinced in the experience and perception of 'domestic' Japanese HRM. This shift in female employee perspective is evident also in China, although from a different social, cultural and economic starting point. For example, Granrose et al (2005) draw on career theory and employment law to explain how opportunities for 'upward mobility' within organisations - mainly state-owned enterprises or SOEs - were equally accessible by men and women. However, organisational and social reality tended to favour men: a phenomenon that and (Granrose et al, 2005:15) ascribe to embedded social-cultural prejudice and, by extension, to SOE cultures

and structures – a scholarly perspective shared by Cooke (2005, 2009), though without explicit reference to a psychological contract. As SOEs in China have become increasingly exposed to global economic forces they have become unable to ‘promise a lifetime employment of upward mobility’ (Granrose et al, 2005:15), meaning that both men and women looking for such mobility are moved to rely on their own resources and develop a so-called ‘boundaryless career’ (cf. Poon & Rowley, 2010b); or - and in what Ohmae (1995) has termed ‘a borderless world’ - a path along which ‘individuals follow a career not committed to a single organization but committed to individual career goals’ (Skramme Granrose et al, 2005:15), and this irrespective of age or gender. Add to this mix those women who have benefitted from being socialised as only children as a result of the so-called ‘one child policy’ in Mainland China or who, in Japan, have chosen a life as women who put career before marriage and family, these individuals have developed what in comparative terms might be recognisable as an ‘international’ perspective on trust and the psychological contract (cf. Cooke, 2009; Yuasa, 2009).

Research lessons learned

Overall, the Japan preliminary study raises issues of research validity without resolving any of them convincingly. The threat to research reliability derives from the insight that none of the interviews could be reproduced. As suggested above, a threat to external validity comes in trying to generalise too assertively based on data from such a small sample of respondents who, themselves, are unlikely to be representative or ‘typical’ for employees across Japanese society - a threat to construct validity justifiably highlighted by Debroux (2006) in his review of the Jackson and Tomioka (2004) book.

5.6 Sampling

As illustrated in reference (above) to Skramme Granrose et al (2005), these research insights informed both the continuation of the literature review process and the sampling strategy adopted for subsequent stages of the preliminary

studies. Here it is worth recalling that, in comparison to the oft-invoked Robinson (1996) and McAllister (1995) studies, this current study is still gathering data at the *T1* initial anchoring stage of the empirical research effort: a stage designed around the implementation of the fixed-design survey questionnaire introduced in chapter two as **Q1** (*Appendix I*).

It is in anticipation of the perceived threats to reliability that many trust researchers choose a fixed-design research instrument. Such survey instruments are commonly used in social scientific research to elicit people's general attitudes towards a complex aspect of social life: the resultant quantitative data and analysis appear reliable (Procter, 1993). However, having established the conceptual complexity of 'trust' as a discrete research concept in previous chapters these preliminary studies are challenged to shed light on the relevance of using fixed-design questionnaires to elicit reliable and valid insights into how and why 'international employees' choose to trust.

As highlighted in chapter four, the purpose of using **Q1** became twofold. Firstly, it should test some of the generalisations suggested in the preliminary Japan study; notably, whether demographic variables of nationality, age and gender might be significant in explaining how international employees singly and collectively express their disposition to trust in contexts for employment and individual career development. Secondly, **Q1** should act as a vehicle to identify and attract respondents willing to participate in the semi-structured interviews and ethnographic conversations presented in Part Three.

Sample population

In total 420 **Q1** questionnaires were administered. The preliminary data discussed here derive from a sample of 48 Japanese and 56 Swiss managers who participated in a series of executive development workshops held in London. These Japanese and Swiss respondents aggregate to form the type of 'convenience' sample common to much social and business-oriented research (cf. Robson, 2002; Saunders et al, 2006) and as demonstrated in the McAllister (1995) Robinson (1996), Atkinson (2007) and Si et al (2009) papers discussed in

previous chapters. The size of each nationality sample exceeds 45 or the number needed in order to make credible generalisations about nationality or other independent variables such as age and gender (cf. Newell, 1993; Denscombe, 1998; Mertens, 1998). As in the Japan study, these Japanese and Swiss employees are assumed to be 'untypical' of their national populations given that their employers had chosen to invest around £5,000 for a week's training, including living and travel expenses. The cost of covering for each managers while away from the office can only be guessed at. Adopting an employer and (by extension) global market perspective, these international employees could be assessed as 'talent' (cf. Cappelli, 2008; Jackson, 2010a). Building on the discussion developed in chapter four an initial research assumption is that they will demonstrate key aspects of a global mindset and thus be in a position to represent an international employee perspective on trust in contexts for employment. A more global indicator of the sample's representativeness appears in the average age of each group: namely, the 'mid-career' band spanning ages thirty-seven to forty-five (Greenhaus & Callenen, 1994; Schein, 1978; Scullion & Collings, 2006). Consequently, there is some clear degree of continuity with the Japan study and with the above-cited international empirical studies.

Context

Reflecting on the validity issues apparent in the Japan study a decision was made to make the research topic (trust) explicit: ethical considerations also played a part (Jackson & Schwegler, 2005). For practical reasons comparisons of 'national cultures' form part of the workshop content and **Q1** was introduced as an indicator that might help participants individualise and test such generalisations. Common to many programmes of cross-cultural training (CCT), the Hofstede (1980) model for comparing 'national cultures' remains an established reference point (cf. Brislin & Yoshida, 1994; Maznewski, et al, 2006; Mead & Andrews, 2009). Other materials are drawn from Trompenaars (1993), Hickson and Pugh (1995), Schneider and Barsoux (2003) and Mead (1998, 2005): i.e. the type of IM and CCM texts discussed in chapter four. Respondents were asked to reflect on how their experience of national cultures in the context of international business

activities might reflect on their own national culture: e.g. in terms of connecting propensity to trust with propensity to avoid uncertainty. It is interesting that in his early analyses Geert Hofstede (1980, 1983, 1993) defines and combines complex notions such as ‘uncertainty’ and ‘anxiety’; however, he does not define ‘trust’. In collaboration with other researchers, and adopting a more international business orientation to his work, Geert Hofstede Junior has since rectified this relative ‘blind spot’ in the original model (Meijer et al, 2006), albeit with only a generally formulated definition of the concept.

Preliminary data analysis

For brevity's sake this current discussion focuses only on the three ‘Generally speaking’ items near the end of **Q1**, thus connecting with the type of *Social Values* survey used to support other experts’ comparative analyses connecting propensity to trust and national culture (cf. Fukuyama, 1995, 2000). Unlike general attitude surveys the design of **Q1** eschews ‘zero’ definitions and instead invites all respondents initially to offer their own interpretations of ‘trust’ before responding to specific prompts – the aforementioned ‘Box 1’.

One operational assumption (supported subsequently by respondent feedback) is that, by the time respondents arrive at the ‘Generally speaking’ section (ca. 9 minutes), they may have tired of prompted situations and be more willing to ‘step back’ and reflect on their own general expectations of trust as an aspect of their social relationships. The box below these three questions is designed to allow space for respondents to expand and further reflect on their ratings. Of particular relevance here are the three demographic variables elicited at the end of **Q1**: age, gender and nationality. A correlation of data to these variables is outlined below:

Taking each ‘Generally speaking’ item in turn, the scores come out as follows:

Item: ***I believe that most people can be trusted***

Swiss sample ($n = 56$)

Total score = 121.5* Mean score = 2.17 (i.e. ‘disagree’)

Mode score = 3 Median score = 3

Japanese sample ($n = 48$)

Total score = 109.5* Mean score = 2.28 (i.e. 'disagree')

Mode score = 3 Median score = 2.25

Item: ***I believe that it is becoming easier to trust people***

Swiss sample ($n = 56$)

Total score = 114 Mean score = 2.04 (i.e. 'disagree')

Mode scores = 2 + 3 (equal) Median score = 3

Japanese sample ($n = 48$)

Total score = 78 Mean score = 1.63 (i.e. '([strongly] 'disagree')

Mode scores = 2 + 3 (equal) Median score = 2

Item: ***I never trust people that I meet for the first time***

Swiss sample ($n = 56$)

Total score = 118.5 Mean score = 2.12 (i.e. 'disagree')

Mode score = 3 Median score = 3

Japanese sample ($n = 48$)

Total score = 94.5* Mean score = 1.97 (i.e. 'disagree')

Mode score = 3 Median score = 3

It is interesting to note already that some respondents chose to write in 'half' values: e.g. '2.5', thereby highlighting general issues of construct validity in the design of such scaled fixed-design questionnaires.

Variables of age and gender

Swiss sample ($n = 56$)

Gender: Male = 36*

Female = 16*

Age: average (male & female) = **38** (Age range of sample: **30 - 54**)

Mean age (male) = **38**

Mean age (female) = **38**

It is relevant to note here that four Swiss respondents declined or failed to state their gender, thus threatening the validity of any generalised findings based on these data.

Japanese sample ($n = 48$)

Gender: Male = 36

Female = 12

Age: average (male & female) = **36** (Age range of sample: **29 - 41**)

Mean age (male) = **35**

Mean age (female) = **37**

Discussion

It should be remembered first of all that the above superficial analysis of data should indicate whether demographic variables of nationality, age and gender might be significant in explaining how international employees singly and collectively express their disposition to trusting other people in contexts for employment and individual career development. After this, the primary objective becomes to identify and attract respondents willing to participate in the follow-up semi-structured interviews and ethnographic conversations. Indeed, several members of the Swiss and Japanese sample populations whose data appears here did volunteer for further participation.

In survey-based research where national identity is taken to be a significant independent variable (cf. Tan et al, 2007; Si et al, 2009), attempts to generalise from individual respondent scores to claims about the trusting attitudes and behaviours of nationally defined populations are fraught with risk. The preliminary studies presented thus far have served to highlight several of these risks. Firstly, the insight that generalising about social attitudes from Likert-type scale scores is perhaps unreliable because:

- The items designed to elicit a response might be ambiguous or incomprehensible

- The range of numerical scale values offered might not correspond to the value that a respondent might actually want to accord for the item
- Distortions in the scale values grow exponentially as the sample size is expanded
- The cross-sectional nature of the survey means that people might score other attitude levels if they had more time for reflection.

These two sample groups completed the questionnaire while I was present in the room. The focus and formulation of the items were (as far as I could observe) unambiguous to all respondents: I offered to clarify any items, if required. The fact that several respondents chose to write in their own numerical scores within the scale suggests that 'social desirability' bias was not an issue – a view reinforced by the fact that several of the Swiss respondents chose not to write in their gender. The cross-sectional distortion remained, however. Some respondents asked if they could complete the questionnaire again later as, after reflection they claimed that some of their views had changed. Those who volunteered for the follow-up *T2* semi-structured interview stage commonly wanted to revise some of the views they had expressed in **Q1**, thus undermining the reliability of the instrument. Together these post-survey events confirm McAllister's (1995) reservations about the validity of data generated by such 'one-off' cross-sectional surveys that offer no embedded opportunity for respondent feedback – reservations shared by experts in psychological contract also (cf. Conway & Briner, 2007). This insight reinforces the validity claim of using diagnostic surveys that promise a follow-up open-ended session, thus inviting respondents to create and work with the type of feedback loop designed into ABI (*Figure 2*). Looking ahead, these feedback channels support processes of professional learning and development described by the Kolb (1984) 'learning cycle', an adaptation of which appears as *Figure 6* (chapter six).

In terms of general attitudes both nationality samples appear to offer similar scores: there appears to be an equally sceptical attitude generally towards trusting people, even in response to the one negatively formulated item on the questionnaire: i.e. **'I never trust people that I meet for the first time'**. This item attracted most qualifying (boxed) comments from both groups of survey

participants and suggests that processes of trusting / distrusting strangers remains a rich field of research (cf. Gambetta, 1988; Gambetta & Hamill, 2005).

The most significant difference in attitude between the two samples appears to be in response to the following item (adapted from Fukuyama, 2000): **'I believe that it is becoming easier to trust people'**. Here members of the Japanese sample appear to be more cautious than their Swiss counterparts. If this does represent a diminishing in terms of general attitudes towards trust in Japanese society then it would correspond to trends identified both by social attitude surveys (cf. Hakuhodo, 2000; Ohmae, 2001) and among an emerging generation of Japanese employees aged in their early to mid-thirties (Iida, 2002). Emerging research in Japanese HRM suggested that this generation of Japanese employees is becoming more 'individualistic' (cf. Watanabe, 1998; Jackson & Tomioka, 2004) and bring fewer loyalty-based interpretations to the employment relationship (cf. Ohmae, 1995, 2009; Jackson, 2007; Debroux, 2010). Official Japanese government statistics suggest an increasing willingness among early or mid-career employees to embrace career mobility and thereby challenge established expectations surrounding interpretations of 'loyalty' to one or other *kaisha* or employer (Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, 2005; Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2006) A more generally applicable assessment might be that this social mobility phenomenon expressed among Japanese respondents as a cautious attitude towards trusting people generally emerges from experiencing the economic turbulence of the 1990s (Porter et al, 2000), a phenomenon observed also in South Korean society after the 'IMF' crisis of the late 1990s (cf. Rowley & Paik, 2008).

Highlighting gender the mode score among women in the Japanese sample was '3' in response to this item, while among the men it was '2'. This suggests a significantly stronger attitude of disagreement among men. It also suggests that Japanese men have developed a more cautious attitude towards trusting people than Japanese women. Perhaps Japanese men have experienced a more sudden loss of social confidence. In contrast, and given the traditional structures for social and career mobility in Japan, perhaps the women in the sample – untypical as they likely are - have adapted more readily to shifting social, cultural and

economic circumstances in Japan. This might indicate some heightened degree of 'self-efficacy' or self-trust (Erikson, 1968; Katinka Bijlsma, 2007 – *personal communication*) – a cause suggested in terms of 'self-trust' by respondent 'J3' cited above.

Qualitative data analysis

Comments in 'Box 2' of **Q1** were provided by a 37 of 104 members of the combined Swiss and Japanese samples. The Swiss samples tended to be more eloquent, perhaps indicating a greater degree of fluency in English writing. The following are unedited and randomly selected responses to the item '**I believe that it is becoming easier to trust people**'.

- *At least in Japan, it has been becoming not to trust people. Because people had become more egotistical than in the past (Japanese male, aged 36: score given: 1)*
- *Past experiences told me that most of the people can't be trusted (Swiss French female, aged 35: score given: 2)*
- *It's intuition – people by people (Swiss male, aged 40: score given: 2)*
- *I belief in the Good in the man (Swiss, aged 33, no gender given: score given: 3)*
- *In my opinion, people have to be trustworthy in the business and most people can be trustworthy and can trust other people (Japanese male, aged 31: score given: 3)*
- *There are only some people I trust, but I tend to see a person's good point (Japanese female, aged 32: score given: 3)*
- *I believe grundsätzlich ('fundamentally') that people can be trusted, most of them. The bad experiences that I had with trust proved that I need to be careful, but I don't change my first thinking (Swiss Italian male, aged 31: score given: 4)*

Research implications

Overall, the similarities across the data indicating general attitudes towards trust between both nationality samples suggest that such attitudes are driven primarily by individual perception and experience rather than by, for example,

ascribed national cultural identity - a view reinforced by the similarities in the overall response patterns across both samples. Given the emphasis still obtaining in cross-cultural research towards assuming nationality as a key independent variable in surveys of this type, this starkly surprising result needs to be tested more rigorously – a process explained below.

A further threat to reliability when using such cross-sectional surveys appears when attempting to build an analysis using quantitative data designed to generate mean and mode scores. Mean scores generated by Likert-type scales are subject to distortion: '3' might be closer to 2.6 than 3.4, thus (potentially) skewing the 'agreement' / 'disagreement' balance. In addition, such scores correlate unreliably with variables such as nationality: e.g. in relation to scores for 'most people can be trusted'. More sophisticated processes of analysis are required.

Expanding the Q1 data set and analysis

This preliminary analysis of **Q1** data worked with mean, mode and median rankings of survey item scores. In doing this some general impression of a 'central tendency' of respondent attitudes and perceptions could be gained (Robson, 2002:408). These in turn support assumptions relating to the trusting attitudes and behaviours attributed to the segment of international employees profiled above. Specific objectives testing validity included:

- Ascertaining whether a sample of international respondents were able and willing to use the full range of scaled scores rather than seek out 'middle responses'
- Ascertaining whether nationality groups appeared to rate all or some items similarly and / or differently and thus give patterned indication as to which variables might be more or less significant.

The purpose of expanding the data set and analysis was to address questions about the validity and reliability of generalisations about nationality: as indicated in chapter four, a fundamental element in discussion of international employees generally and in what might be termed an 'international' employee

perspective on trust. One question emerging out of the preliminary data analysis is that the markedly 'individualistic' character of this particular international (e.g. Japanese) sample might challenge established notions of a collective 'national cultural identity' (cf. Hofstede, 1980). From the total of completed Q1 responses the following sample selection was made: German ($n = 46$) and British ($n = 47$). In order to connect more directly with the Tan et al (2007) study, and in the spirit of triangulation, a third nationality was added to the mix: Chinese ($n = 46$). The gender distribution across the three sample populations was 34.5% male to 61.2% female employees; the mean age was 45, although 5% of the sample did not offer their age: 44.6% of the total sample fell within the 31-51 age range.

Two competing hypotheses were posited:

H1: *Employees perceive trustworthiness similarly in all national cultures*

H2: *Employees perceive trustworthiness differently according to characteristics of national culture*

Drawing on Tan et al (2007) and their reworking of the ABI model (Mayer et al, 1995) the data designed to test these hypotheses were subjected to various types of covariance analysis: Levene, Kruskal-Wallis, followed by ANCOVA 1 and 2 (Field, 2005; Kinnear & Gray, 2002). This more rigorous analysis of the quantitative data generated by Q1 supports the conclusion that H2 (above) should not be rejected: i.e. the analysis suggested that characteristics of national culture *are* significant in describing, explaining and (in theory) predicting international employee propensities to trust.

5.7 Scholarly debate

According to Hofstede (1991:116) 'uncertainty is to risk as anxiety is to fear. Fear and risk are both focused on something specific: an object in the case of fear, an event in the case of risk. Risk is often expressed as a percentage of probability that a particular event may happen'. In the context of the recent

Hofstede (2001) version of the model, Japan and Switzerland score very differently in terms of 'uncertainty avoidance', with Japan ranked seventh and Switzerland 33rd out of 53. The propensity in Japan ranks 'high' and stands in marked contrast to people in other leading Asian economies such as Hong Kong and Singapore. Assuming that the Hofstede analysis is both reliable and valid this comparative ranking suggests that people in Japan demonstrate a more pronounced propensity to 'avoid uncertain situations' than their counterparts in Switzerland, who might be more willing to embrace uncertainty (cf. Harris et al, 2003:22). Consequently, it might be assumed that Swiss people tend to be more resourceful in 'translating' perceptions of uncertainty into perceptions of risk. In contrast, it could be predicted that Japanese people are more likely to adopt a more cautious 'trusting stance' when encountering unfamiliar situations (cf. McKnight & Chervany, 2006). This would entail hesitating in situations where outcomes are perceived as uncertain and beyond personal control - the 'locus of control' concept familiar to studies of developmental psychology (cf. Erikson, 1994) and, as suggested in chapter four, attributable to a so-called 'talent', 'global mindset', or international employee perspective. All these assumptions rest on a collective perception of national cultural identity in both the Swiss and Japanese samples.

In terms of relative propensities to values and behaviours associated with 'collectivism' as opposed to 'individualism' Japan scores significantly differently than Switzerland, ranking 22/23 relative to Switzerland's ranking of 14. Harris et al (2003:22) conclude from this comparative analysis that '[in] collectivist societies such as Japan people are integrated into strong, cohesive groups which throughout people's lifetimes continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty'. This connects with the traditional views of HRM in Japan alluded to above (cf. Yoshimura & Anderson, 1997; Jackson & Tomioka, 2004). Echoes of the 'trust in difficult times' definition by Kono and Clegg (2001) apply here also. To this national cultural profile Hofstede (2001) offers the dimension of hierarchical 'power distance', whereby senior (primarily male) members of Japanese society act in a benevolent and competent way towards younger employees. This brief analysis appears to support predictions in relation to the

likely 'trusting stance' of Japanese people as expressing a preference for a collective response towards managing uncertainty. By extension, among a sample of Japanese employees it suggests that 'loyalty' will appear as a core and mutual expectation in people's experience of trust and, by extension, of the employment relationship.

Trust as faith revisited

In outlining a 'critical approach' to trust research the discussion in chapter one highlighted etymological and conceptual links between trust and scholarly expressions of *faith*, as demonstrated in the rational three-stage causality assumptions underpinning the structure of western management models and research constructs such as the psychological contract (*Figure 1*). In this current chapter a similar exercise links trust and *truth*. Combining reference to concepts as deep and complex as trust, faith and truth inevitably invites controversy.

To illustrate, Brendan McSweeney (2002) challenges Geert Hofstede's macro-level analysis of 'national culture' in, for example, former Yugoslavia, claiming that putting too much faith in labels of nationality does little more than feed and sustain 'a statistical myth' (2002:11). In direct response Hofstede (2002) termed McSweeney's argument a 'diatribe' and his style 'unnecessarily abrasive'. In his own defence Hofstede (2002) claims that later editions of his 1980 study make much of McSweeney's criticism 'obsolete' and suggests that it is only because of the 'paradigm shift' towards multidisciplinary study of culture that Hofstede's original work had prompted such 'resistance'. However, Hofstede's defence is curious in that he claims that McSweeney (2002) misses one of the key points about the model: i.e. that the dimensions for comparing national cultures are 'constructs': similar to the psychological contract, Hofstede's national cultural dimensions 'do not exist'. However, this appears tantamount to claiming that an empirical study should be interpreted only conceptually after the event. Furthermore, it assumes that 'national cultures' as defined by Hofstede do 'exist' - which brings the debate back to McSweeney's question about what, from both an emic and an etic perspective, a 'Yugoslavian' - or, indeed, a modern-day

Chinese or US American 'national culture' might actually look and feel like.

Echoing Tan et al (2007) along with Harry and Jackson (2007), one approach towards answering this question is to invite *emically* anchored / locally sourced voices to participate in the research process. Seeking to develop the type of international employee perspective outlined in chapter four and here again should support this endeavour. To illustrate, Khilji (2002, 2003) is explicit in her critique of the etic perspectives posited by prominent western researchers such as Trompenaars (1993) and Hofstede (1991). Profiling emerging management and professional cultures in her native Pakistan she claims that such western research data are dated and 'do not take into account the variations in employees' values across age and types of organizations'; for although 'some societal values remain rooted in tradition, managerial values reveal challenges reflecting a modern market economy' (Khilji, 2003:142).

Another approach rehearsed in this current study and illustrated in the critical emphasis given to discourse analysis is to follow the conceptual lead given by Rousseau et al (1998) and systematically develop a multi-disciplinary approach towards eliciting and recording empirical research data on trust. As illustrated in chapter four and again here, questions of individual perceptions and identity are key towards understanding how societal, managerial and (not least) empirical trust research cultures 'work' for the individuals involved (cf. Baier, 1983; Jones, 1996; Kurihra, 2006). To illustrate, drawing inspiration from Anthony Giddens and his appeal to recognise modern identity in terms such as 'we are not what we are, but what we make of ourselves' (1991:76), literature critics in China now openly explore the emergence of new interpretations of the 'self' (cf. *Figure 5*) which, traditionally 'speaks of a person's relation, not to himself / herself, but to others with himself as an object and not as a subject' (Tam & Yip, 2010:xi). Particularly in respect of women across China the 'self' has been 'constructed mainly as a product of Confucian discourse which is psychologically and politically oppressive' (2010:xii). Developing a similar theme Chinese sociologists recognise that traditional geographical / historical anchoring of individual identity in a 'native place' or hometown is, as a result of mass

migration to far away urban developments becoming supplanted by an expression of 'Chinese cosmopolitanism'. Unlike the more traditional *huaqiao* (Chinese *diasporas*) of, for example, Singapore (cf. Tan & Chee, 2005), modern career-minded 'sojourners' within and outside China 'at any given time and place' are willing to 'go anywhere': 'It is his (*sic*) provisionality that seems particularly salient and needs to be foregrounded' (Chan, 2005:126). Identifying these trends in lines of enquiry beyond research into IM, CCM and IHRM - and yet cutting across these lines as the employees involved migrate across the boundaries set by the researchers trying to categorise and study them - the following insight by a Chinese literary historian (Chen, 2006:26) appears particularly apposite in relation to the research objective and design chosen for this current study:

- *Cultural identity is no longer a national or ethnic issue of the postcolonial and the diasporic. With the global flows of information, commodity, and cultural influences, and as we experience anew the meaning of boundaries (or lack thereof) and rethink the signification of nation, ethnicity and community, cultural identity has to epitomize a whole new set of ontological and epistemological questions facing us today. It is a central global issue precisely because it is also a personal issue.*

This insight also describes a relevant context for the last of the preliminary studies discussed here.

5.8 The Hong Kong focus group

The Hong Kong focus group (HKFG) comprised twenty-five students from the forty-five enrolled on an executive MBA (EMBA) programme delivered over two years (2005-6) in Hong Kong. This choice of sample emulates thus Rousseau (1990) and McAllister (1995). Similar to Robinson (1996), the work with this group extended beyond a *T1* intervention using the Q1 survey instrument. Rather, it developed into an extended form of *T2* discussion enacted face-to-face and using electronic communications media. Having the first encounters face-to-face and with an explicit research focus added value and (inevitably) bias to the effectiveness of subsequent group and individual discussions about trust (cf.

Schneider et al, 2002). The respondents spent only weekends acting as students: for the rest of the week they were full-time employees and parents and, judging by the Email and mobile phone traffic they routinely dealt with at weekends, never appeared perpetually to leave the workplace: the organisation along with family concerns appeared ever with them.

Of the twenty-five members of the HKFG sample 14 were female, thus representing a higher proportion than women 'economically active' in Hong Kong, where the balance tends to be around 65:35 male to female (Hong Kong Government, 2006). The gender distribution in the larger group of forty-five was 50:50. According to Tan and Torrington (2004:253) 'the more ambitious' among Hong Kong middle-level, mid-career managers tend to 'go for an MBA degree on a part-time basis'. For many female employees it can be surmised that next to family and time-intensive work commitments, part-time study is their main option and that 'going for' an MBA helps them compensate for perceptions and experiences of disadvantage in the still male-oriented market for management careers (Lo et al, 2003). Generally speaking, 'going for an MBA' continues to suggest a mid-career shift (Ng & Ng, 2009); or, adopting a more global perspective, perhaps experience of a 'mid-career crisis' (Schein, 1978). This appears particularly true among women who perceive themselves otherwise disadvantaged in terms of management-track career opportunities (Venter, 2002) – an insight that influences how local employers define their market for staff resourcing (Wong, 2003). Echoing the Kono and Clegg (2001) definition of trust cited previously, it is during such perceptibly 'difficult times' that trust might be expected to become more explicit as a point of reference in how employees approach issues of employment security and individual career development – a cross-cultural research assumption that proved to be shaky.

The average age of the group was thirty-seven, which (fortuitously) reflected the median age of the Hong Kong workforce around that time (Hong Kong Government, 2005). Reference to 'nationality' as an independent variable proved problematic. Typical for the local MBA market of the time increasing numbers of students commuted from Mainland China; other ethnic Chinese group members declared themselves British passport holders. As with the sample populations

discussed thus far in this chapter it would be misleading to claim that these respondents were 'typical' Chinese in the sense suggested by, for example, Hofstede (2001). They were multilingual: studying in English and working in English, Cantonese and (increasingly) Mandarin. Three HKFG members used Japanese at work.

Discussion

The twenty-five participants in the focus group interviews divided themselves into three sub-groups to discuss and report back on the question:

- *In your view and experience, to what extent is trust a significant feature in your relationship to your employers?*

The reference to 'employers' was chosen in order to allow respondents to talk about their current and / or former employers. There was no call to identify these employers by name.

The group discussions proceeded in line with ethnographic surveys aspiring to appear 'natural' (cf. Guba & Lincoln, 1979; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Robson, 2002). An additional structure or framework derived from my dual role as researcher and EMBA tutor, whereby andragogical techniques were applied in order to leave space and time for the groups to construct a narrative (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). This narrative was later summarised and each group member sent a copy for comment - a design feature described in chapter six as 'data validation'.

Findings

The narrative constructed by the HKFG highlights issues relevant to interpreting meanings attributed to trust in employment relationships. Citing extracts *verbatim*:

- *With more job insecurity, employees are becoming less loyal. People change jobs more often and at short notice for jobs with better pay*

- *Because many talented staffs change jobs so often, employers don't want to pay for training. We have to pay for this (MBA) by ourselves. Because the market is getting so competitive, MBAs help us get a better job or, at least, keep the job we have.*
- *With increased pressure at work and pressure for jobs, working hours are becoming longer. There is much stress in families. More people are joining unions; more conflicts end up in a court (employment tribunal). You can't trust any boss these days!*
- *Because of increased worry about unfair dismissal or discrimination at work, many people save all their Emails with their boss. I spend more than one hour each day checking, writing and storing my Emails - just in case. I'm also looking for better jobs.*
- *We're getting more talented people from the Mainland. They have good English, good university qualifications and, of course, they usually speak and write better Mandarin than people in Hong Kong. The competition for good jobs is getting harder.*

Noteworthy in this sample is the repeated use of ('Other 2') references: e.g. 'many people', thus suggested the type of 'collectivistic' tendency among Chinese employees identified by Hofstede (1980, 2001).

Trust

One of the most striking responses came in back-translating the 'trust' concept. A common language definition from Chinese emphasises 'trust' as 'feeling sure' that 'somebody or something will do what they should do' and as a 'belief' that somebody is 'honest and good' (Oxford, 2005:531). The group view was that discussing trust explicitly in contexts for negotiating the employment relationship 'works in English'. However, in Chinese Cantonese the concept of 'trust' (信任) feels 'inappropriate', as in its explicit form it is the preserve of family and close social circles outside of work. The affective and moral tone evident in the language definition (above) perhaps explains this: explicit invocation of feelings and beliefs combined with perceptions and expectations of 'goodness' are perhaps more relevant to circles outside work.

A researcher response to the suggestion to avoid explicit reference to trust in contexts for employment can take several forms:

- *Accept as generally true*
- *Reject as a rogue response*
- *Conduct follow-up studies designed to give more context to this response.*

By design, the third option was chosen – as detailed in Part Three of this study.

5.9 Summary

Reflecting critically on these preliminary studies gives guidance as to whether a subsequent research design will 'work' (Phillips & Pugh, 2006:84). Sufficient empirical and conceptual evidence has been presented in this chapter to indicate that the current design will 'work' in pursuit of the stated research objective, and notably, in the generation of qualitative data describing international employee interpretations of trust in contexts for employment and individual career development. In sum, these interpretations should inform the sought after international employee perspective on trust in the psychological contract.

Chapter Six: Research design

experto credite

Virgil (*Aeneid* xi: 283)

6.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to detail a research design appropriate to achieving the research objective chosen to guide this study; namely:

- *To explore meanings attributed to trust when interpreting and negotiating the psychological contract in contexts relevant to IHRM.*

In terms of structure the discussion in this chapter links Parts One to Three much as 'trust' links the three boxes of the contract depicted in *Figure 1*. Similar to each of the *Figures* presented thus far a research design can be understood as both product and process: it stands with apparent coherence; and yet, through critical questioning and practical application, it evolves. In truth, the design presented here has been evolving since the research objective was first formulated. As a process and product of discourse the design captured here represents *both* an outcome of critical reflection *and* a plan for future implementation, as demonstrated in the primary studies detailed in Part Three.

6.1 Research assumptions

All designs proceed on the basis of research assumptions. The assumptions informing the design of this study have emerged through the literature reviews and the preliminary studies detailed hitherto. They include:

Uncertainty is a given. According to Lewis and Weigert (1985:976) 'trust begins where simple prediction ends'. Where prediction ends is uncertainty. This design should help reduce uncertainty surrounding the achievement of a specified research objective. Should it not be achieved this time, the design should at least give structured guidance on how it might be achieved next time round.

Uncertainty can be reinterpreted as risk. Paraphrasing from Gigerenzer (2002) the concept of risk represents human perceptions of vague or opaque uncertainty communicated in the form of numbers and other logic-driven calculations. Basically this entails reinterpreting human perceptions of uncertainty in the form of numbers: e.g. ratios, odds, and probabilities. An international business venture might be attributed 'a 50-50 chance of success'. On top of the effort invested into the literature reviews and preliminary studies this design should have an improved chance of being implemented effectively, by its designer and by other researchers.

Uncertainty is ubiquitous. This insight renders human beings cognitively and affectively vulnerable (cf. Bronowski, 1976), and thus liable to trust (cf. Rousseau et al, 1998; Banerjee et al, 2006). This is why research designs like this are necessary: they represent an expression of trust that a research objective might be achieved. Constituting an expression of individual free will, they also express an act of faith: *In šā Allāh*.

Given a free choice, people prefer to trust and be trusted. Despite advances in communications technology the perception bias of human beings remains grounded and geared primarily towards survival (cf. Erikson, 1959). As illustrated in previous chapters, human perception is both universal and individual in that it describes each individual's 'acquisition and processing of sensory information' (Sekuler & Blake, 1994:515). As Kramer and Cook (2004) maintain, given a choice, people prefer to trust rather than not trust, or distrust, as in this way our inherent sense of human vulnerability might be managed. Perception feeds into perspective and thus human beings naturally seek to trust others who appear a prospect of physiological, cognitive and emotional satisfaction or wellbeing. In order for the researcher to achieve maximum benefit from working with the many research stakeholders whose contribution should help this design work in reality, the design should allow for such qualitative benefits to accrue back to them also: e.g. through the type of feedback channels suggested in chapter five.

People choose to trust in expectation of a reward. The above assumptions connect logically to the view that people are (only) likely to risk trusting someone or something in expectation of some reward. Drawing on Rousseau et al (1998) the implementation of this design should not threaten the inherent vulnerability of people it affects: social researchers have an ethical responsibility; trust researchers perhaps even more so. Drawing on Maslow (1954) and the notion of the international / global mindset, this design should describe a source of learning – indeed, of potential ‘self-actualisation’ – for all who support its implementation.

One final and rather humbling assumption emerging out of the preliminary studies is that all human beings are ‘experts’ in processes of human thought and action relating to trust: trusting is an essentially human activity, thus connecting with the ‘H’ in IHRM. This theme informs the design presented here, and notably in respect of the data validation and ethnographic conversation processes rehearsed during the preliminary studies. Inspired by Virgil (cited above), the mottos supporting this research design process are: ‘trust in people’; ‘trust in their expertise’.

6.2 Standard elements of research design

According to Robson (2002:79) a research design involves ‘turning research questions into projects’. By this interpretation, a research design represents a process of addressing a series of connected questions. As presented in chapter one, these include:

- *What is trust?*
- *Why do people trust?*
- *Do people attribute different meanings to trust according to culture and / or other context-specific factors?*
- *How relevant is trust to employee interpretations (perceptions and experiences) of the psychological contract?*
- *To what extent might these interpretations vary across national contexts for employment: i.e. across contexts relevant to IHRM?*

Real world research

In the context of this study overall the questions (above) are designed to be addressed in terms relevant to the real worlds of IM, IHRM and CCM practice and research. Robson (2002:1) characterises 'real world research' as an activity that 'take(s) place on someone else's territory' – a fitting image for what is essentially an exploratory study, and one that seeks to take the research of trust to people working in international contexts for employment and individual career development. In contrast to much experimental and conceptual research where emphasis tends to be on mechanisms of control defining a 'territory' laid out by the researcher (cf. Yamagishi et al, 2007), real world research aspires 'to say something sensible' about aspects of social reality that are 'complex' and 'relatively poorly controlled' (Robson, 2002:4). Research focussing on trust appears to fit this particular bill.

Design elements

Using questions Robson (2002:81) highlights standard elements of research design:

- *What is the study trying to achieve?*

This question is addressed in the research objective reiterated above and as contextualised in chapter one.

- *What theory will guide or inform the study?*

The question of competing theories relevant to trust research was addressed in Part One. With a view towards informing future IHRM practice and research the psychological contract has been selected as a theoretical framework guiding a deeper exploration of meanings attributed to trust.

- *To what questions is the research geared to providing answers?*

This study is guided by reference to a series of connected implicit and explicit questions designed to prompt a critical approach towards exploring and interpreting the phrase 'trust in the psychological contract' from an 'international employee perspective'. Unlike fixed design research the researcher

is not the sole source of questions. Echoing Takeuchi and Nonaka (2004) and their invocation of *ba*, if the space and time is structured well then formerly *implicit* questions might become *explicit* – and thus learnt from - as the research moves to ‘territories’ perceived as relevant to research stakeholders.

- *What specific techniques will be used to collect data?*

According to Denzin applying processes of methodological triangulation generates the potential to act as a ‘bridge between quantitative and qualitative methodologies’ (2007:5075). This research design acts as a keystone in a bridge linking between the quantitative data focus of Part Two and the more qualitative data focus of Part Three. Having identified and rehearsed issues of research validity and reliability in the preliminary studies, the focus in Part Three shifts to more qualitatively oriented longitudinal approaches. Here a key measure of research performance becomes ‘trustworthiness’ – a measure explained in more detail below. Paraphrasing from Bloor (1997), triangulation with emphasis on research validity and trustworthiness should shed light on the complexity and depth of trust as both a research concept and as a social phenomenon relevant to contexts for IHRM research and practice.

- *From whom will data be sought?*

The sampling process was initiated during the preliminary studies. As highlighted in chapter four, the sampling strategy represents a core aspect of design and thus is discussed separately below.

6.3 Sampling strategy

Sampling means selecting a defined group of people from a total discernible population of all people or ‘all the (potential) cases’ (Robson, 2002:260). The sampling process is designed to elicit the experiences, perceptions and expectations of trust among individual members of a defined population as they seek to navigate complex social reality: in this case, employees identified as ‘international’ in terms of their relative work experience and career expectation. In contexts for empirical or ‘real world’ research sampling tends to be purposive

in that it is guided by specific and (as in this design) explicit research objectives and with a clear expectation of generating relevant research data.

Guided by this objective is a corollary process to sampling; namely, *selection* or deciding which people to bring into the sample. As with a literature review - or, indeed, when managing a standard HRM resourcing process - 'selecting in' implies a process of 'selecting out': for practical purposes, every sample needs to be narrowed down; a 'shortlist' is created. As Burgess (1984) emphasises, this narrowing down process is judgemental and risky, just as choosing whom to trust and whom not to trust is risky. To illustrate, employees selected for inclusion in the sample might prove less informative than those left out - the researcher can probably never know. In the event, of the 420 respondents who completed Q1 forty-five were selected for inclusion in the semi-structured interview stage (chapter seven) while fifteen of these volunteered or 'self-selected' for participation in the more open-ended 'conversation' stage, selected data from which is presented and discussed in chapter eight.

Strategy choices

According to Teddlie and Yu (2007:96) a sampling strategy 'stems logically from the research questions and hypotheses'. In this case, the strategy emerged via research questions and ultimately in response to a stated research objective to explore meanings attributed to trust by members of a sample population defined (in chapter four) as 'international employees'. In the spirit of triangulation (cf. Denzin, 2007) the sampling strategy chosen for this study has three main aspects. Drawing on the experience of the preliminary studies, these can be characterised as convenience, theoretical, and *verstehend*.

The rationale behind choosing convenience sampling was outlined in chapter four and subsequently applied during the preliminary studies. Having come to some understanding and expectation of what a so-called 'international employee' profile might look like an attempt was made to identify the territories upon which these employees might be found. In order to emphasise the individual employee perspective on trust in the psychological contract (cf.

Rousseau, 1989, 1990) a choice was made to work with respondents away from their places of work: the relative collapse of the Japan study together with the relative success of the HKFG experience outlined in chapter four lends credence to this view. As is common in business and psychological contract research one 'convenient' access point to international employees is through the formal structures offered by programmes of advanced study or executive / expatriate training (cf. Robinson, 1996), as exemplified by the initial Q1 and HKFG interventions. In the event, adopting the convenience sampling approach generated a global and context-giving understanding of how members of a select population of international employees are generally disposed towards trust. Given that conceptual research into trust continues to generate outcomes so diverse as to appear contradictory (cf. Nooteboom, 2006), the randomness inherent in convenience sampling can be regarded as a strength: the sample population comprises 'real people' talking about 'real experiences' and on a 'territory' of their own choosing (Robson, 2002). As research stakeholders they may feel empowered: *experto credite*.

For this reason time, space and opportunity is designed into this study to allow respondents to talk about their 'real' experiences and expectations of trust-based relationships across a rich variety of work- and employment-based contexts: echoing the Si et al (2009) study, these respondents are invited to express and develop their own expert voice. This approach to sampling has parallels to the final stage of clinical trials of new drugs. After years of rigorous and painstakingly detailed controlled research the tipping point for bringing a new drug forward for licensing and then to market is commonly by means of testing among a convenience sample population, often of volunteers, who are articulate enough to describe their own symptoms in response to formally validated survey questions. The generalisation that these random or convenience trials support might be judged against previous research results and, not least, the professional judgement of the doctors and scientists involved (Lunneborg, 2007:788). As illustrated below under the heading 'data validation', this strength of convenience sampling appears to be enhanced further when the volunteers involved are also invited to make critical judgements on what 'trust in the

psychological contract might mean, drawing on their own considerable experience of international employment and management: again, *experto credite*. As suggested in chapter four, these internationally experienced employees offer arguably the most reliable source of homogeneity from across a sample population at first selected and then self-selecting for participation in this study.

Theoretical sampling involves identifying a group of people whose elicited perspectives and experiences might coalesce to a point of 'saturation'. This saturation might support the development of a new sociological theory (cf. Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Gold, 1997). An adaptation of theoretical sampling is applied in this current study in order to test out an established theoretical framework: the psychological contract. Not all the respondents interviewed in chapter seven had encountered the model before: however, it was expected that each of them would readily perceive its relevance to their past, current and future experiences of employment. Consequently, this next stage of the sampling / selection effort is focussed on people who express a critical sensitivity to the social relevance of trust generally (after their experience of Q1) and specifically in their role as trustors and trustees in contexts for interpreting and negotiating work-based relationships.

Last but by no means least there is the *verstehend* sampling strategy used to select the respondents whose testimony forms the core of data discussed in chapter eight. The term 'verstehend' derives from Weber (1913) and denotes an *understanding* or empathetic approach to sociological research: it assumes that the creation of social reality - indeed, of what might constitute 'truth' about the social phenomenon 'trust' - might only be achieved with the assistance and contribution of those involved in attributing meaning to this reality, most immediately, the 'self' and 'others' identified in *Figure 5*. As interpreted by Gold (1997), *verstehend* sampling denotes more a principled approach to ethnographic research than a discrete sampling strategy: in ontological terms, researchers create and share their experience and understanding of reality with the researchees - this is the fundamental principle. This is because ethnographic research foregrounds the role of research respondents in charting the ultimate design and direction of the research process: they become both stakeholders in

and co-authors of the final product (cf. Robson, 2002). It is for this reason that this research design is presented *after* the preliminary studies: i.e. after the researcher-researchee relationship has been 'anchored'. It is an appropriate approach to take because the sampling process after the semi-structured 'contract' interviews (chapter seven) is designed to be self-selecting: interviewer and interviewee agree together a venue and agenda for ongoing *conversations* about what trust in contexts for employment and professional development might mean, and why. This *verstehend* approach links to a core performance ambition of this study, described here as 'trustworthy' research.

6.4 Designing trustworthy research

Hakim (1987) offers a vivid interpretation of research design. Drawing on metaphors of architecture and style she challenges researchers to produce a design that they would be willing to 'live with': i.e. read and re-read subsequently (Hakim, 1987:1). Anecdotal evidence drawn from among the many 'post-docs' who have contributed to the development of this study is that few meet Hakim's challenge.

As an artefact, architecture - like food and language - is one of the most public expressions of culture. Hakim invokes the culture of western scholarly tradition. However, it can be understood more diversely than this. Combining the metaphors of architecture and discourse a research design becomes like a traditional Japanese house. Supported by firm wooden posts, it is built and rebuilt on its original site in response to the passing seasons and to the living needs of its inhabitants (Young & Young, 2007:15). According to one interpretation of social research working towards trustworthy research design is equivalent to designing for research that is both valid and, in the judgement of research peers and other stakeholders, *legitimate* (Hatch, 2007:5083). Consequently, and as evinced in the preliminary studies, one approach towards conducting research into trust is to emphasise research validity over research reliability, synthetic claims for legitimacy over diagnostic claims for 'truth'. To illustrate, during the course of the preliminary studies it became apparent that

pronounced levels of trust were required for respondents to talk openly about their reasons to quit or stay in a current job: on the one hand, trust in the integrity or interest of the researcher; on the other, self-trust on the part of the respondent. In practical terms it was suggested that respondents might require space and time to develop and express this trust.

Designing for trustworthy performance

The discussion in Part One highlighted the potential significance of trust in measures of HRM practitioner performance (cf. Tzafrir, 2005). A parallel discussion emerged in Part Two in respect of trust researcher performance. The preliminary studies sought to match three generic measures of research performance: reliability, validity, and credibility. This is standard practice, and several examples highlighted how these measures - singly and in combination - might be achieved, missed, and / or even manipulated. This illustrates what Gargiulo and Ertug (2006) describe as the 'dark side of trust' or the insight that even well intentioned decisions to trust might generate unforeseen or 'undesirable outcomes': i.e. outcomes other than the efficiency and economic performance benefits commonly associated with trust-based interactions and exchanges. To illustrate, I remember a Chinese graduate student of cross-cultural management explaining (tearfully) how her apparent failure to engage in 'independent thinking' (specified in the assessment guidelines) could be attributed to her being categorised as 'a collectivist person'.

Robson (2002) makes explicit reference to 'trustworthiness' as a performance measure of real world research. This measure appears particularly relevant to this current study in terms beyond mere semantics. The review of trust literature in chapter two evinced how perceptions of trustworthiness are central to human expressions and understanding of trust (cf. Yamagishi, 2007). Consequently, adopting 'trustworthiness' systematically as a measure of research design and performance is likely to have practical consequences for researcher attitudes and behaviour where an ultimate objective is to establish and develop a mutually beneficial research relationship.

Trustworthiness in fixed designs

Robson (2002) suggests that fixed design questionnaires such as Q1 should fulfil strict conditions of validity and generalisability, readily equated to perceived 'trustworthiness' (Hatch, 2007) in that it expresses the power of research findings to be applied and perceived as relevant 'in other contexts, situations or times' (Robson, 2002:100). To this end Robson encourages researchers using fixed designs to engage in a processes of systematic self-criticism, asking repeatedly whether the instruments chosen 'adequately capture the actual state of affairs' and whether any relationships established by the findings 'can be considered generally to be *true*' (2002:100 – *emphasis as in original*). As highlighted in chapter five, the data generated by Q1 offered only general and to a degree contradictory insights into what might be considered valid or 'true'.

Trustworthiness in flexible designs

A core and integral feature of this research design is its flexibility, as evinced in the semi-structured interviews, validation procedures and open-ended conversations – all process interventions described in more detail below. Drawing explicitly on the measures of 'trustworthiness' in flexible research design set out by Robson (2002:169) this study also seeks to achieve 'appropriate standards' of performance expected of PhD candidates. As recommended by Phillips and Pugh (2006) these include:

- *Question asking* - demonstrating an open and enquiring mind
- *Good listening* - attempting to apply a systematic and ethical understanding of how human perception works
- *Adaptiveness and flexibility* - allowing the design of the study to emerge iteratively in response to primary and secondary data as they emerge
- *Grasp of the issues* - being transparent and honest in applying powers of interpretation (e.g. techniques of discourse analysis) while simultaneously admitting to limitations of these
- *Lack of bias* - conducting and reflecting on pilot studies, and generally leaving space for other research stakeholders to question and contribute to the research design process.

Elements of the so-called 'global mindset' are evident here, as befitting a study that sets out explicitly to elicit an 'international employee' perspective on trust. The extent to which these standards of research trustworthiness and this specific research objective have been achieved is examined in chapter nine.

Designing in processes of human perception

As reiterated above, the notion of 'leaving space for other research stakeholders to question and contribute to the research design' reflects a *verstehend* approach towards working with ethnographic data (Taylor, 1989; Gold, 1997). Echoing Griffin (1995) and Egan (2001), it serves to cast research respondents into a role as 'consumers' and (potentially) co-beneficiaries of the empirical research process and the relationship that frames it.

For as discussed in chapter two, 'trustworthiness' is both a human perception and a social-cultural attribution. As with all dyadic human interaction both processes are subject to negotiation: not least, the exchange and negotiation of meaning (cf. Geertz, 1973). However, perception as emphasised in the Yamagishi (2005) three-phase theory of human trusting attitudes and behaviours is one aspect of 'trustworthiness' not emphasised sufficiently by Robson (2002). For perception-based human interaction is a two-way process. To illustrate, in research interviews both interlocutors might 'get on', but for a variety of reasons respondents might withhold their 'truth' about trust. They might not be self-aware or articulate enough to express true attitudes. They might be reluctant to recall critical incidents accurately. They might believe (along with a former work colleague of mine, Derek Condon) that 'trust is overrated' and question the purpose of talking about it explicitly and extensively: in truth they might prefer to talk about 'loyalty' or 'fairness'.

Some indication of what an outside observer might consider 'reticence' - or even evasion - became evident in the controversy surrounding explicit reference to the 信 concept among members of the HKFG. There are parallels here with scholarly conceptualisations of the psychological contract, where conceptually and perceptually the researcher might choose to reinterpret 'trust' as 'fairness'

or 'the delivery of the deal'; or, in an attempt to stake a typological claim, introduce collocations such as 'respect' and 'procedural justice' that are not yet fully located on the map of trust and psychological contract research (Conway & Briner, 2007). Consequently, the researcher should not expect to elicit 'true' attitudes and sentiments simply because a systematic attempt has been made to build 'trustworthiness' into the research design. In practice, the trust researcher:

- *should recognise that informants can and do hold conflicting sentiments at one time and they hold varying sentiments according to the situation in which they find themselves (Dean & Whyte, 1958:186).*

The experience of the preliminary studies suggests that a 'truer' picture of people's attitudes towards trust – and towards trust research itself – would more likely emerge out of negotiating longitudinal, open-ended interviews set within contexts defined by their 'real world' relevance rather than by an interpretation of relevance most convenient to the trust researcher. Invoking *Figure 5*, the 'truth' moves somewhere within the triangulation process and through processes of exchange and negotiation through time and across locations, a 'truer' and more generalisable understanding of truth should emerge (cf. Kurihara, 2006). Entrusting the respondent to influence the research process moves away from claims generated by contrived 'one time juncture' events that Bryman (1989) adjudges to limit the credibility of much quantitative and experimental research, thus rendering the data this research generates poorly grounded to support predictive and causal generalisations (cf. McAllister, 1995). However, this process of shared exchange entails engaging researchers and respondents with sufficient self-trust to accept and negotiate a space of reduced definition and control in terms of research processes and outcomes.

Sample selection revisited

Consequently, attempts to design trustworthy research entail asking critical questions during the selection of interviewees and potential conversation partners. Echoing Dean & Whyte (1958), these include:

- *Which informants does the researcher select as being 'accurate and perceptive'?*
- *How can this selection process be evaluated?*
- *Can it be evaluated fairly?*
- (And does it matter?)

It does matter because both parties must be willing to invest time and resources such as reputation and potential loss of face into the research process and, as a reward, share a stake in its unpredictable outcomes. People should know how and why they have been selected ('entrusted') or not for a particular task - a line of expectation that again connects with the so-called 'trust-control dilemma' discussed in chapter three. In short, the selection process matters because, in contexts for international business and IHRM, trust continues to 'matter' (Zaheer et al, 1998; McEvily & Zaheer, 2006).

Communication styles

In processes of trustworthy research design the selection of research respondents / interlocutors ('other 1') is similar to selecting literature ('other 2') for review, except that in the former case more immediate concerns of professional self-esteem are at stake. In both cases researchers are usually dealing with the reputations and (potentially) the 'face' of relative strangers. The practical dilemma implied by this insight can be illustrated in reference to 信. This written character combines three main visible components: on the left-hand side there is a human being; bottom-right there is a mouth; above the mouth, a series of lines signifying sounds or words. A trustworthy person is someone who 'stands by what they say' - a conceptualisation readily translatable into western languages. However, a particular emphasis commonly appears in so-called 'low context' communication cultures where emphasis tends to be on making relevant information explicit (cf. Hall, 1976). In contrast, trustworthiness in Asian cultures is commonly attributed to people who could say more but choose not to: for example, in order not to risk causing loss of face to others. This tacit

information 'appears' in the spaces between the horizontal (sound) lines in 信 and might represent the type of implicit 'high context' communication style that, for example, is deemed to distinguish Asian (e.g. Japanese) managers from their low context western (e.g. German) counterparts (cf. Hall, 1976, 1983). Despite Hall's typically either / or western-style analysis, this is not to say that such 'between the lines' communication is unique to Asian cultures. Rather, it illustrates how a chosen emphasis of communication style needs to be sensitive to situational context. This insight is important also in experimental fixed-design research: e.g. where English might be used as a *lingua franca* in a game inviting (requiring?) international students to tell their truth about trusting other sample members pre-selected by the researchers involved (cf. Yamagishi et al, 2007).

Such insights generate considerable implications for any attempt to set up trust-based researcher / respondent interaction in processes of international or cross-cultural HRM research and practice. Longitudinal *verstehend* research should (in theory) generate sufficient space and time for perceptions and attributions relevant to processes of trustworthy research to be exchanged, developed and given meaning mutually between researcher and respondent, and it could be argued that contracts such as 'HRM polices' should proceed similarly towards shared perceptions of relevance. Drawing on Robson (2002:169), and echoing Phillips and Pugh (2006) cited above, specific behaviours and attitudes towards this objective include: question asking, active listening, adaptiveness and flexibility, a grasp of the issues, and demonstrable transparency in respect of each stakeholder's bias.

Learning from international business practice

As with *effective* international management (cf. Mead & Andrews, 2009), effective international research is a communication-based process. Consequently, when working with a sample population of international employees – many of whom have management responsibilities themselves – it is as well to draw relevant lessons from practice in international and cross-cultural management communications. To illustrate, Griffin (1995:82) emphasises perceptions of relative trustworthiness in managed attempts to 'turn qualified

prospects into first-time buyers', where her overarching business objective is to establish customer loyalty. Applying processes of meta-representation (cf. Wilson, 2000) Griffin attributes the following questions to would-be customers:

- *Is the person really knowledgeable?*
- *Can we trust his or her integrity?*
- *Is the salesperson concerned with our welfare of just making a sale?*
- *Will the company still be in business in two years?*

In such contexts Griffin (1995:83) equates trust to 'credit' or a reputation for being perceived as reliable. On reflection, the above questions can be attributed to participants in the preliminary studies, and particularly those who volunteered 'loyalty' into the interview and conversations stages presented in Part Three.

Consequently, it is appropriate here to draw on insights from processes of 'relationship marketing' to predict how participant expressions of loyalty and trust might support an ongoing research relationship: i.e. beyond the formal features of a research design. To illustrate, Egan (2001) recognises that concepts such as 'trust' and 'commitment' remain notoriously 'ill-defined' in international management literature (2001:91); nonetheless, he offers a scale for gauging how an exchange- and (ideally) trust-based business relationship might develop. He works with a notion of 'perceived value' whereby 'service quality' is measured against 'perceived sacrifice' (Egan, 2001:132). The 'quality' measure is informed by making 'a cognitive evaluation of service across episodes': e.g. points of dyadic contact or interaction. Recognising that all relationships generate 'costs' that include 'opportunity costs' (2001:64), Egan posits the 'sacrifice' measure as representing a calculation of price or physical effort: e.g. a perception and experience of how relatively 'easy' or 'hard' it is to keep the relationship going. This conceptualisation invokes the processes of 'active trust' explored in chapter four (cf. Giddens, 1991; Child & Möllering, 2003). Interestingly, Egan also applies a 'psychological contract' to his field of global marketing, defining it as 'an explicit / implicit pledge of relational continuity' (2001:61).

As also highlighted in chapter four, relevant connections and insights can be generated by empirical trust researchers who, seeking to identify and interact with members of a global market segment of employees defined as 'international', might learn from established process of international business and marketing (cf. Mühlbacher et al, 1999). In doing so these researchers might credibly connect with the style of communication that their intended respondents commonly use: i.e. they might achieve something of the 'congruence of expectations' which, paraphrasing from Beckert (2006:329), is sought after by international providers of services / products as they attempt to appear trustworthy to customers / employees / research respondents with a pronouncedly international perspective on trust.

Reinterpreting Q1 as a international product / service

Against this background it is possible to reflect on how respondents might experience Q1 and other such fixed design surveys. The two objectives set for Q1 were achieved: it tested some of the generalisations suggested in the preliminary Japan study about whether demographic variables of nationality, age and gender might be significant in explaining how international employees singly and collectively express their disposition to trust. Secondly, and looking ahead now, it prompted a number of respondents to participate in the semi-structured interviews and ethnographic conversations described below.

Common to other such survey instruments Q1 generated quantifiable data illustrating patterns of social attitudes, propensities, and behaviours from which researchers might infer underlying social values (cf. Arber, 1993). In terms of research performance there is credibility to be gained by formatting and presenting quantitative data: they are assumed to be 'non-flippant' (Robson, 2002:233). In truth, this claim might satisfy researchers in search of monotonic or 'ordering potential' in response to complexities of social reality (cf. Procter, 1993). Judging by the response of those who volunteered to commit their intimate thoughts to Q1, it appeared to attract significant levels of credibility and authenticity (cf. Denscombe, 1998; Macdonald & Tipton, 1993). For, according to Newell (1993:107), 'a questionnaire should be designed with the respondent in

mind' – a recommendation that connects overtly with the notions of customer loyalty' and 'relationship marketing' illustrated above (cf. Griffin, 1995; Egan, 2001). Designing with the end-user in mind appears especially valid in attempts to elicit people's attitudes about something as potentially sensitive as trust.

Echoing de Vaus (1996), the repeated 'I tend to' rubric appeared to work in an unthreatening manner; the standard S + V + O format appeared to prompt international employee reflections on the 'I' of self-identity (Choi & Han, 2009). *Box 1* offers Q1 respondents space to engage with the research focus in their own terms, thus ameliorating the initial impact of (inevitable) researcher bias (Czaja & Blair, 1996). The invitation to use 'any language' is valid because English is not assumed to be the first language among a sample of international employees (cf. Newell, 1993). Invoking diverse language perspectives connects with the dual *etic* (global) and *emic* (localised) perspectives promoted by Tan et al (2007), similarly generating data relevant to processes of back-translation. Prompted by the *etic* instruction assuming a universal (cross-cultural) significance of 'trust' some respondents offered drawings – a response examined in more detail in chapter nine.

Overall, the language used in Q1 is simple and formulaic because the processes being engaged (perception and social attribution) are complex (de Vaus, 1996). The Likert-type response scale common to this type of quick 'social attitude' survey (cf. Arber, 1993; Newell, 1993; de Vaus, 1996) uses a six-point scale in order to discourage 'lazy' bias towards the '3' value. The items are not numbered, as each should attract as much thinking and response time as the respondent prefers. The more open-ended items are grouped towards the end of the list (de Vaus, 1996), including the 'generally speaking' items discussed in chapter five. Finally, the 'generally speaking' *Box 2* is designed to give space for people to explain some of the values that might underpin their expression of general 'yes/no' beliefs. Again, the objective is to connect with respondents as individuals (cf. Newell, 1993; Ray, 2007). Finally, there is space for eliciting the independent demographic variables of age, gender and nationality against which certain data correlations can be drawn. Overall, the administration was designed to be low cost and effective (cf. Newell, 1993; de Vaus, 1996) and to ensure a

representative response rate (Robson, 2002:249-250) – objectives that the design and implementation of Q1 appeared to achieve.

6.5 Semi-structured interviews

The transfer of respondent attention to ‘trust in the psychological contract’ is designed to add value in terms of their professional development and learning in addition to supporting general – though valid – interest in trust as a research concept. The follow-up interviews gain *semi*-structure with reference to the so-called ‘three-box’ model of the contract illustrated in *Figure 1*. A semi- as opposed to a fully structured interview is recommended for this style of conceptual exploration as the fuller variety might achieve little more than replicating the respondent experience of Q1, albeit with a more interactive sheen (cf. Cooper & Schindler, 1998).

Focussing on ‘trust’ as a core content element in *Figure 1* builds on insights generated by the open-ended discussion phase of the HKFG: it serves to develop the desired ‘international employee perspective’ on trust. Members of the HKFG knew of the psychological contract from studying HRM on their EMBA programme. The post-Q1 interviews offered them an opportunity to make the model directly relevant to their own experiences and expectations of the employment relationship; however, it should be noted that the focus on trust on the contract represents an expression of researcher bias. Structuring interviews using an established management model lends credibility and the potential for external validity beyond the intimacy of dyadic exchanges of individual experiences, anecdotes, and opinions – as rich as these sources of primary data can be. Incorporating a familiar model into the process should lend immediate face validity and encourage interviewees to seek more information. It also provides researchers with a coherent ‘shopping list’ of concepts and relationships to be explored (cf. Powney & Watts, 1987). To illustrate, several interviewees asked questions such as:

- *Why does that arrow connect the 'trust box' to this other box with 'organisational commitment' in it? And what does 'organisational commitment' mean anyway?*

Despite the initial inevitability of researcher bias, the objective going forwards is to allow space and time for the respondent to make a previously (albeit generally) understood concept relevant to their own experience and 'perception of reality' (Mead, 2005:16): a core expression of cross-cultural sensitivity and thus an expression of a 'global mindset' (cf. Briscoe et al, 2009). Data from such exchanges allow both researcher and respondents to 'test out' established scholarly conceptualisations of a theoretical construct (cf. Pugh & Phillips, 2006). Consequently, those respondents familiar with the model from previous study or training were those – initially, at least – most likely to prove 'articulate' as informants (Gold, 1997). However, such prior knowledge and expectation generates respondent bias and thus threatens data reliability: as with Q1, each respondent starts from a different stage of experience and, more immediately, language fluency and situation-specific confidence. Consequently, for the sake of research validity the open-ended structure of the interviews is designed to allow space and time for a 'trustworthy' exchange about bias; hence the decision to supplement the semi-structured interviews with open-ended conversations about trust; and, not least, to invite all respondents to engage in the data validation process, as explained below.

Administration

Experience garnered during the preliminary studies suggests that interviews scheduled to last thirty minutes are likely to overrun. The location can vary: cafés, works canteens, and (rarely) dedicated meeting rooms in the interviewee's own organisation. The latter option give the researcher more context-specific understanding to the individual interviewee's testimony, as evidenced in the Atkinson (2007) paper. However, and given that the individual employee is the focus for attention and not the employer, the immediate physical environment should be of secondary significance. Later interviews can be conducted using Skype™.

As Denscombe (1998) points out, interviews might appear to be an enjoyable 'easy option' in qualitative research, but they are extremely resource intensive to administer credibly. In the Japan study the first interviews were recorded using an MP3 device. Later, hand-written notes were used to draw up written and oral summaries of the interviews – summaries that will become the raw material of the validation process explained below. As conversations moved to explore individual decisions to quit or stay, issues of confidentiality and disclosure became important, so the preferred method of recording became post-interview summaries co-validated by each individual interviewee, as illustrated in chapter eight.

6.6 Ethnography: data validation

Attempts to design 'trustworthy' semi-structured interviewees can borrow from both fixed and flexible approaches, and especially when reconciled under the research notion of *ethnography*. Adopting a combined exploratory and interpretive research approach, ethnography can be described as 'a form of translation and reduction' (Mason, 1996:13). Invoking *Figure 5* ethnography involves a purposive interaction between the researcher (Self) and selected representatives of research respondents and other stakeholders (Other 2). As highlighted above, it is the 'Self' (researcher) who retains responsibility for the selection process and for the 'translation and reduction' processes highlighted by, for example, Mason (2002). However, when attempting to interaction about and with reference to something as complex as trust it is as well to leave time and space for the contribution of 'experts': in this case, the international employees who 'know' things about trust that an ethnographic researcher might only assume. Thus the shared input / validation approach used in the semi-structured interviews is *ethnographic* in that the focus for qualitative data generation is through fieldwork: it assumes that the researcher is able to develop and sustain a 'close and continuing contact with those being studied' (Gold, 1997:388-9) – in short, an ongoing and mutually beneficial relationship (cf. Egan 2001). By extension, *effective* ethnographers of trust are likely to be those whom research respondents perceive as credible and trustworthy (cf. Griffin, 1995;

Robson, 2002). Thus, a further interpretation of the role of an ethnographic researcher is of someone who helps 'reduce and translate' the 'stories' that people tell about themselves and their fellow human beings - an opportunity that Clifford Geertz (1973, 1983) memorably elevated to a scientifically-based 'interpretation of cultures'. The stories generated by the ethnographic interviews and conversations in this current study were indeed reduced (i.e. noted down) and translated (summarised) by the researcher / Self. By means of systematic processes of validation, the stories elicited in conversation are made open to 're-translation' by the respondents themselves.

Data validation

Adopting an ethnographic approach offers the opportunity to involve research respondents in processes of *data validation*: i.e. through a form of 'customer feedback' channel (cf. Egan 2001). Because both the researcher and the respondents involved were able and willing to travel between and (using electronic means) communicate across Europe and Asia, the perspective both parties shared was consistently international (cf. Mühlbacher et al, 1999).

Also called 'data verification', processes of data validation involve research respondents and other stakeholders in 'checking' the accuracy and veracity of the data the researcher claims to have recorded: the researcher reserves technical judgements about their validity. However, allowing time and space for individual respondents to reflect and comment on what a cross-cultural researcher claims the respondent has said and further enquiries about what s/he might have meant with what was said is one way to encourage respondents irrespective of ascribed national cultural identity to express their own version of 'I' - be it the *xiao wo* or *da wo* (Choi & Han, 2009). In theory, the data validation process encourages respondents to anchor their perspective on trust and on an evolving trust-based research relationship within a private sphere of their own choosing. Echoing the 'locus of control' concept discussed in chapter four, each respondent can choose to minimise the distraction of researcher bias and inference along with other (e.g. work-related) pressures and simultaneously seek to express an identity less shackled by reference to any presupposed

national cultural identity. In contexts for trust research aspiring to be 'trustworthy' this allowance of time and space is designed to enhance research validity and reliability (cf. Taylor, 1989). Not least, it is designed to communicate respect. Unfortunately, it threatens researcher attempts to complete a study such as this efficiently - another example of the potential 'dark side' of trust and a research limitation highlighted in chapter nine.

In practical terms the data validation process entails the researcher sending each interviewee a summary of their testimony and inviting changes, additions, questions, or other forms of critical comment, this achieving the combination of 'Self' and 'Other' perspectives alluded to above. In theory, it generates a reliable and valid 'fix' on a particular claim to truth. It targets 'intersubjective consensus' (Miles & Huberman, 1994:11) on what the phrase 'trust in the psychological contract' might mean from a dynamic international employee perspective.

The ethnography of data validation

In contexts for ethnographic research Gold (1997) highlights the advantages in applying data validation in order to prompt responses and feedback from informants who might be less articulate than others. As highlighted in chapter four, this appeared to be the case among some members of the HKFG who - in English, at least - appeared comparatively quiet. This is one reason why the decision was made to focus on eliciting individual level testimony in the semi-structured interviews and offer follow-up conversations. As Gold (1997:392) explains, these quieter individuals might be the most knowledgeable or insightful about a particular research topic. Designing in time lags between data generation exercises facilitates further reflection in response to perceptions and experiences of reality. This might reduce the validity of the temporally anchored initial data offering; however, and when interpreting trust as a process, it might generate something more valid about trust overall.

Echoing both Gold (1997) and Ray (2007) a key distinction between relying on data generated by instruments such as Q1 and data generated by ethnographic interview is that, in the latter case, 'there is no temporal or procedural

separation between description and analysis' (Gold, 1997:399); ethnographic interviews allow space and time for respondents to attribute their own meanings to perception and experience rather than, as in fixed design surveys, pre-load their terms of reference (Ray, 2007:5187). This process has a parallel in purpose and design to what in applied linguistics is termed 'language for specific purposes' teaching. The expert assumption is that learners both want and need to make use of the language they learn (e.g. English) while they are learning it rather than preparing only for some future exam or qualification (cf. Widdowson, 1983). This is a valid parallel to draw given that several respondents agreed to participate in the study as part of their professional (e.g. international English language) development – a design feature explained in more detail below.

Correspondingly, the validation process should reflect what was said in the interviews and conversations at the time and not claim to offer some 'updated' or 'edited' summary: as objectively as possible the researcher should attempt to offer 'a summary' plain and simple: the respondents should contribute to the final text. Here Gold (1997) uses the term 'synthesis' rather than summary, and this is probably more accurate given that inevitable bias of selective note-taking and memory – the processes of subjective perception - that will inform any researcher claim to be offering a strictly 'reliable' summary. This process is akin to testing hypotheses and assumptions, thereby acting as a check on nascent or emerging researcher bias (cf. Phillips & Pugh, 2006). 'In these ways, ethnographers strive for multiple assurances that their data are valid' (Gold, 1997:396). Unlike when using fixed design instruments such as Q1, the emphasis here is on generating data that is valid rather than reliable.

6.7 Conversations about trust

According to Denzin (2007:5077):

- *Each method yields a different picture and a slice of reality. What is critical is that different pictures be allowed to emerge.*

The open-ended *verstehend* conversations are designed to encourage respondents who participated in the semi-structured interviews to reflect and talk more freely (cf. Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), and specifically about the role that trust might play in their interpretation and expectation of employment relationships generally and, even more specifically, on their decision(s) to quit or stay with a particular employer. Echoing Shaw (2002), these conversations proceed from the premise that change is a routine experience in contexts for employment, and that employee intentions or decisions to 'quit or stay' are also becoming more routine, and particularly in markets for international employment and career development where the players are designated as international 'talent' (cf. Scullion & Collings, 2006; Cappelli, 2008; Jackson, 2010b).

According to Gold (1997:389), adopting a *verstehend* approach offers a 'firm, useful, and desirable foundation' for conducting ethnographic fieldwork and for continuing to test research findings after they have been written up and subject to initial validation. In the context of this current research design, the approach is firm in that it is anchored in a voluntary and mutual expression of a 'psychological contract' between researcher ('field-worker') and research respondent ('informant'). Once again, the focus for research ('trust') becomes akin to the process - or aspiration - to conduct 'trustworthy' research.

Assessing trustworthiness

As Karen Cook suggests, 'trust typically emerges when the parties involved have the opportunity to assess trustworthiness over time' (2007:5082). Given the relative lack of structure (apart from that referenced by time, place and medium for communication), assessing research performance during the conversations is problematic - at least, in quantitative terms. Primary measures include:

- The fact that conversations were volunteered at all
- Their frequency and length
- The quantity of the data recorded and validated

- The quality of the data recorded and validated

In appearance and potential effect these measures so resemble those adopted by practitioners attempting to add a 'hard' (i.e. quantified) dimension to their commonly 'soft' measures of HRM performance (cf. Huselid & Becker, 1996). The last two measures (above) illustrate this hard / soft tension.

In design and practice the conversations follow on from Q1 and the semi-structured interviews and involve an ever diminishing number of respondents – people increasingly displaced by time, place, and an ongoing series of personal and professional events; or, applying the terminology of relationship marketing, 'episodes' (Egan, 2001). Understandably, respondents also lose interest and become 'too busy': the respondents supporting this study are full-time employees and not full-time students sharing a university campus. Consequently, a significant amount of data generated at this stage in the study was communicated virtually, commonly by Email.

Professional development

In Gold's view, conducting ethnographic fieldwork is 'useful' in as far as it might inform a source of professional learning for those involved. *Figure 6* (below) guides ethnographic researchers towards how this process of learning might be designed.

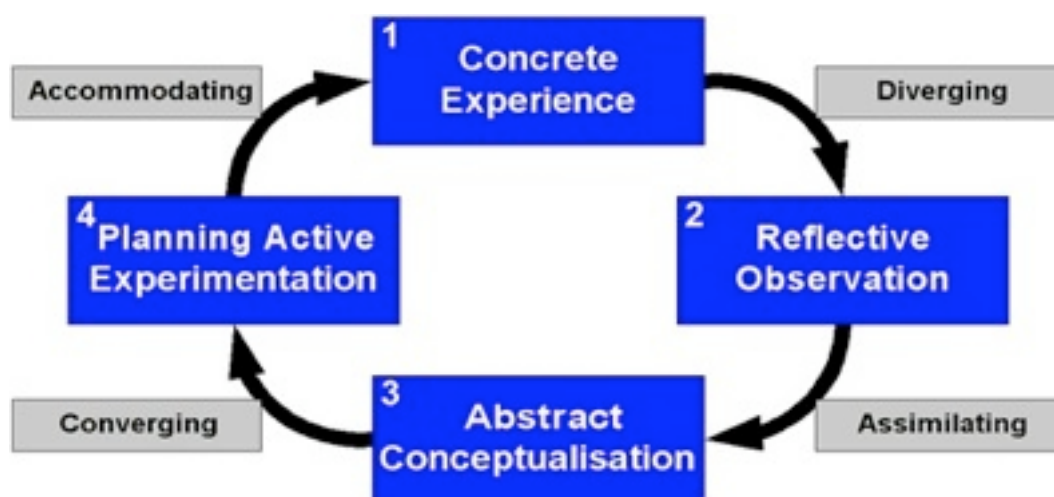
If respondents are to be expected to offer useful data to the researcher they need to perceive the process as being relevant and useful to them: there is an assumed expectation of reward, and here the potential for immediately transferrable individual learning becomes apparent. Given the investment of time, face and other resources by both parties it is desirable that the conversations become something to look forward to: echoing Kramer (1996), it is uplifting to trust and feel trusted. Several respondents from the Q1 to the conversation stage were explicit in stating their interest in 'learning something' about themselves as mid-career professionals. As suggested above, some combined these perceived benefits with the desire to improve their English language fluency; or, in more scholarly terms, their 'global mindset'. My background in adult education and

professional learning and development prepared me to work with such expectations and act in several cases as a 'sounding board' and, where invited, as a guide during individual respondent musings about career development. This opportunity is embedded in processes of ethnographic research:

- *The field-worker uses the face-to-face relationships with informants as the fundamental way of demonstrating to them that he or she is there to learn about their lives without passing judgement on them, that he or she is an absolutely trustworthy recipient of candid and thoughtfully expressed accounts of experiences and reflections on their meanings and implications, and that he or she will do his or her utmost to say and write nothing about them that will knowingly cause them any harm (Gold, 1997:394).*

Learning about other people's lives is fundamental to social anthropological research (cf. Geertz, 1973; Gilbert, 1993; Rapport & Overing, 2000). However, from the perspective of international employees a more practically useful form of learning concerns processes of professional development. Here, 'learning cycles' relevant to contexts for adult learning (*andragogy*) and professional development are relevant (cf. Kolb et al, 1974; Kolb, 1984, 1994).

Figure 6: The Adult Learning Cycle



Source: (Kolb, 1984 - adapted)

Attempting to integrate the experiential learning cycle (*Figure 6*) into the design of the semi-structured interviews and, albeit less formally, into the conversations about trust suggests the following research guidelines:

- *Phase 1:* Offer respondents an image of the ‘three-box’ psychological contract model (*Figure 1*) supported by three standard questions
- *Phase 2:* Guide respondents (via pre-set questions) to relate the model to their own experience
- *Phase 3:* Invite respondents to reinterpret the terms of the model (with initial explicit focus on ‘trust’) relevant to their own experience
- *Phase 4:* Prompt respondents to imagine how other people might interpret ‘trust in the psychological contract’ in real life, and why
- *Phase 5 / 1* Repeat cycle while in a follow-up conversation inviting respondents to *diverge from* their initial response to ‘trust in the psychological contract’, to reflect on how they *assimilated* this into their own understanding of the combined concepts, and on how they might *converge* this new understanding in making sense of their own and other people’s experiences of contract negotiation in future as part of their ongoing professional and career development: the *accommodation* linkage.

Referring to this cycle can guide experiences of learning that both researcher and research respondent can share and benefit from, each in their own way. This entails *converging* onto a shared path of learning using the ‘map’ provided by *Figure 1*, albeit starting from different starting positions for *divergence*: e.g. informed initially by differing perspectives on the phrase ‘trust in the psychological contract’. On this basis both might ultimately *accommodate* any new insights gleaned into a different level or stage of professional or career development: the respondent as an international employee, the researcher as a scholar-practitioner in IHRM. Identifying and (over time) bridging meaningfully across the gap between initial perspectives towards an outcome of perceived mutual benefit is what characterises ethnographic approaches to research (cf. Mead, 1972; Geertz, 1973; Gold, 1997; Ray, 2007) and connects with cross-cultural / international explorations of trust outlined in chapter four (cf. Child & Möllering, 2003; Tan et al, 2007; Si et al, 2009).

6.8 Research ethics

It is salient here to further explore the ‘vulnerability’ condition of trusting relationships, as invoked in the extract by Gold (1997) cited above. For he then goes on to describe the *verstehend* approach in terms of an exchange and negotiation of meanings – as implied in *Figure 6*. The combined conceptual connection to trust and to the negotiation of a ‘contract’ and / or the professionally-referenced relationship outlined above can be inferred from the exchange cited by Gold (1997), although his emphasis on ‘absolutely trustworthy’ is an exaggeration and appears to betray something of the researcher’s own ideological bias (cf. Fukuyama, 1995). To illustrate, much of the effort to achieve research reliability appears to rest on the sampling process - echoing HRM truisms about employee selection: ‘get the right people in, get the right data’. Earlier in his piece Gold recommends selecting informants on the recommendation of (local) ‘pastors, newspaper reporters, courthouse employees, school administrators, etc.’ (Gold, 1997:392). In the current climate of ‘data protection’ and other personal security concerns (cf. Parkins, 2009), this approach appears naïve, impractical and unethical.

Cross-cultural research communication

The equivalence made by Gold (1997) between face-to-face communication (the researcher demonstrating an active presence and interest) and ‘face-to-face relationships’ (cited extract above) is relevant in respect of the types of trust-based relationships explored in the preliminary studies. Echoing McKnight and Chervany (2006), ‘all relationships begin somewhere’, and if the initial ‘somewhere’ allows face-to-face interaction, the foundation for subsequent and perhaps virtual communication and relationship building appears more solid than if the interlocutors remain geographically distant from each other. Perhaps this insight rests on the fundamental assumptions about trust and human perception rehearsed throughout this study. The rehearsal analogy is relevant here, and particularly in respect of initial encounters between non-native speakers of English. In such situations, Ellis (1990) emphasises the benefits of seeking the type of shared familiarity – expressed as a relaxed and open

informality – that can be achieved by allowing space and time for the development of shared discourse patterns: a precursor, it could be argued, for shared learning (cf. Kolb, 1984). This is achieved by ‘constant face-to-face monitoring which affords the speaker(s) the opportunity for constant repair so that careful planning is not necessary’ (Ellis, 1990:199).

As illustrated in chapter two, processes of human perception, attribution and communication remain rooted in basic conditions of relationship building, including perceptions of uncertainty and the unknowingness and the vulnerability conditions. Developing mutually recognised and coherent repair strategies in dyadic communication is necessary because people take time to move from being strangers to being acquaintances: in Luhmann’s (1998) terms, time to develop their own sense of ‘contextual confidence’. This is why virtual communication usually proceeds more effectively – and informally – after an initial face-to-face encounter (cf. McKnight, & Choudhury, 2006; Lee-Kelley, 2006, 2008). This is why exchanging critical information exclusively through virtual (e.g. Email) communication can lead to an overload of ambiguity and / or mis-interpreted intent and thus to a breakdown in communication and thus in relationships (cf. Xiao & Benbasat, 2007). Re-invoking the temporal anchoring concept, if a relationship begins on a shaky foundation it struggles to develop with confidence: it is as if the initial ‘promise’ remains too unarticulated and thus relatively easy to traduce (cf. Rousseau, 1990; Robinson, 1995). In this current study all the respondents selected for conversations had been members of the original Q1 and semi-structured interview samples where face-to-face interaction was required and thus (in theory) where communication repair strategies had been rehearsed and become routine.

In 1997 Gold probably underestimated the facility of advanced communication technologies such as Skype™ currently - and particularly in research contexts where the sample in question is international rather than local. Irrespective of time, place and medium, Gold’s emphasis on avoiding ‘harm’ connects directly with previously discussed conceptualisations of ethical trust research (cf. Jackson & Schwegler, 2005; Banerjee, et al, 2006) and thus the foundation for ‘trustworthy’ research proposed by Robson (2002).

Ethical trust research

One overarching concern identified by Jackson (2007b), building on Jackson and Schwegler (2005), is the ethical dilemma associated with empirical and interpretative approaches to trust research. With this type of approach to research in mind, Miles and Huberman (1994) devote a summative chapter to 'Ethical Issues in Analysis' and claim that:

...qualitative data analysis is more than a technical matter. We cannot focus only on the quality of the knowledge we are producing, as if its truth were all that counts. We must also consider the rightness or wrongness of our actions as qualitative researchers in relation to the people whose lives we are studying (Miles & Huberman, 1994:288).

Their advice appears sound. However, their emphasis on data analysis might distract from the importance of incorporating ethical considerations into research design and thus into the choices that inform this design. Miles and Huberman, (1994:289-90) go on to suggest a range of 'ethical theories' that might give formal structure to the researcher's chosen attitude. One represents the type of 'critical theory' approach expressed through Part One (cf. Western, 2008). Another supports the decision outlined above to design processes of professional learning and development into the hoped-for researcher-respondent relationship: a 'learning contract' as much as a psychological contract (Denise Skinner, 2007 – *personal communication*). As with trust decisions generally risk and uncertainty are involved, invoking the risk that the researcher calculates what benefit best serves the respondent thereby assuming a 'teacher' or mentor role. A fine balance is necessary here: mentors who control in order to guide might inspire learning (cf. Tomlinson, 2004); those who control in order to pursue their own agenda might appear patronising (de Vaus, 1996). However, those who appear to relinquish all control might appear incompetent (cf. Griffin, 1995). Ultimately, the balance of impressions made and sustained by the ethnographic researcher will influence another party's perception and evaluation of the relative reliability / validity balance in the data s/he subsequently presents.

Consequently, and along with perceived trustworthiness, ethics can stand as a measure of trust researcher performance: i.e. as one of the so-called 'Five Es' of business performance: effectiveness, efficiency, economy, equity, and (as here) *ethics* (Jackson, 2007a). Ethics can be promoted systematically by emphasising and negotiating shared interpretations of trust, fairness and the delivery of the deal (Jackson, 2007b). In research terminology this model would equate to the 'covenantal view' described by Miles and Huberman (1994:289), where the researcher's actions are judged 'according to whether they are congruent with specific agreements made with others in trusted relationships'. Applying a cross-culturally sensitive or global mindset approach means being flexible when balancing (mainly) 'western' conceptualisations of 'trust' against 'eastern' (e.g. Turkish) expectations of explicitness when attempting to build research relationships based and sustained on trust (cf. Tan et al, 2007). As highlighted in chapter four, Steers et al suggest that 'multicultural competence' might entail 'understanding that a signed contract can mean different things in different places' (2010:38). In discussion about offering a form of 'learning contract' along with a confidentiality guarantee to Turkish respondents I was advised to do this informally rather than offer an undertaking in writing, as this – from a relative stranger – might signal potential untrustworthiness (S. Arzu Wasti, 2007 – *personal communication*). As a novice researcher I followed this expert advice.

6.9 Summary

The discussion in chapter one explained how an initial motivation to embark on this study came out of my reflections as an IHRM practitioner on the importance and relevance of trust to building and maintaining cross-cultural employment relations and to social relationships generally. However, this insight appeared often frustrated by the lack of clarity about what 'trust' actually *is*: many international management textbooks and 'how to' guides for international business appeared to avoid or underplay this question. In Modern Greek there is a convention for indicating some ferry departure time thus '00:00' – meaning

'time uncertain'. Continuing to work to similar 'zero definitions' of the trust concept serves to compound the uncertainty surrounding the concept: failing to declare what research assumptions are being worked further compounds this situation.

The reviews of literature in Part One confirmed the limitations of relying exclusively on data generated by cross-sectional survey instruments to support scholarly explanations of what a phrase such as 'trust in the psychological contract' might mean (cf. Conway & Briner, 2007). Furthermore, key studies that do employ more longitudinal approaches tend to be markedly 'unicultural' in focus and / or assumption (cf. Rousseau, 1990; Robinson, 1996; Atkinson, 2007). In this current chapter a research design has been presented that should allow ethnographic data to be generated, analysed and shared in pursuit of a trust-based researcher-researchee relationship – a relation that might furthermore promote professional learning and development; more generally, a process that might extend and add value to established research insights about what 'trust in the psychological contract' might mean.

Part Three: Testing the boundaries of established research

The discussion in the following chapters works towards testing the boundaries of established research, as befits this type of study (cf. Phillips & Pugh, 2006). The empirical exploration begins with trust 'anchored' spatially within *Figure 1* before becoming the focus for a dyadic and critical dialogue. During this extensive process trust becomes further 'anchored' in the professional reflection of individual respondents and (it is hoped) in the researcher-researchee relationship which, incorporating *verstehend* principles, should support a professional learning experience shared (potentially) by all parties to the research relationship and (by extension) to a psychological *research* contract with trust at its core. It is through this empirical, longitudinal and (ultimately) ethnographic research process that the main contributions of this study emerge, along with some of its key limitations.

Chapter 7: Interviews about trust in the psychological contract

For Words, like Nature, half reveal

And half conceal the soul within

Alfred Lord Tennyson (*In Memoriam A.H.H., Canto 5*)

7.0 Introduction

Insights emerging out of the literature reviews include i) trust is complex and ii) the common location of 'trust' as a core content element of the psychological contract is (conceptually, at least) unstable. These insights are tested empirically in this current chapter, where an attempt is made simultaneously to develop an international employee perspective on what 'trust in the psychological contract' might mean. The overall effect is to emphasise and elicit individual employee perspectives and thus replicate procedures established by Rousseau (1995, 1998), Robinson (1995, 1996), Atkinson (2007) and Conway (1999), and as recommended more recently by Conway and Briner (2007). Echoing Robinson (1995) these interviews represent research intervention *T2* in the series of formal encounters between researcher and research respondents. This intervention develops on the preliminary studies and the temporal anchoring of the trust relationship by further offering a spatial context within which individual respondents might attribute meanings to trust in the psychological contract. As highlighted in chapter one, each *T2* encounter should serve to consolidate the individual respondent's 'stake' in the research process.

7.1 Managing the semi-structured interviews

The sample of interviewees whose testimony appears in this chapter volunteered from the original convenience sample involved in completing the *Q1* survey questionnaire. Forty-five respondents elected to participate in the interviews and are thus sufficient in number to represent a sample population of 'international employees' as defined in chapter four (cf. Denscombe, 1998;

Mertens, 1998). Correspondingly, these respondents are assumed *a priori* to bring a perspective to this exercise that is informed by reference to a global or international employee mindset (cf. Sparrow et al, 2004; Briscoe et al, 2009; Steers et al, 2010). To illustrate, during the preliminary studies it became apparent that these employees envisage their individual career development by reference to trends in international business and to shifts in global markets for employment.

Precise details of interview design were given in chapter six. Here it is important to re-emphasise how the written and oral summary of each interview became the focus of a data validation process. From an interviewer perspective adopting this approach entails aspiring towards ethnographic research processes such as 'active listening' and 'empathy', leaving the interviewees space and time to interpret the research focus (trust) freely within the standard and explicit structure of each interview (cf. Ray, 2007). From the respondent perspective this arrangement represents an opportunity to exert control of what happens to their data, thus courting the 'locus of control' propensity discussed in chapter four. The primary role of the researcher / interviewer thus becomes one of an ethnographic 'reporter' (Gold, 1997) or 'auditor' (cf. Carney, 1990) whose primary objective combines eliciting relevant primary data and, where feasible, facilitating professional reflection and (potentially) professional learning and development (cf. O'Dwyer, 2006).

Structure

The structure of each interview is given by reference to the depiction of the psychological contract appearing as *Figure 1* followed by three standard questions. The responses to these questions were recorded by hand and subsequently coded – a process outlined in *Appendix II*.

The standard questions are:

- i) *What does this diagram of the 'psychological contract' say to you?*
- ii) *How do you interpret the role of 'trust' in this diagram?*

iii) Can you relate the contextualisation of 'trust' in this diagram to your own experiences of employment in your current or in a former organisation?

Testing theory

The 'three-box' depiction of the psychological contract presented as *Figure 1* was used to give symbolic structure to the interviews – a depiction also used by Atkinson in her 2007 study. It should be noted here again that unlike the Atkinson research this current study locates and emphasises trust *in* the psychological contract – initially, at least. In a more general fashion Atkinson (2007) chooses to explore trust *and* the psychological contract.

The version of the contract depicted in *Figure 1* represents an established theoretical construct (Conway & Briner, 2007): its design should describe, explain and predict human attitudes and behaviours, representing these processes in visual or metaphorical terms. One purpose of the interviews is to test out and, where possible, develop on this theory (cf. Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Phillips & Pugh, 2006) by eliciting contextualised meanings attributed to trust from the perspective of international employees. The contract outlined in *Figure 1* gives initial context to the attribution process, while the research focus is reinforced in the three questions used to introduce the model and (potentially) generate data that might begin to outline relevant towards developing an international employee perspective. After experiencing Q1 each respondent is aware that the research focus is 'trust'. Using *Figure 1* as a visualisation of psychological contract theory the interviews proceed from the hypothetical premise that each interviewee will recognise and respond to the salience given to 'trust' in the model - hence the emphasis given to an 'initial contextualisation' above and the claim for a valid shift of emphasis from the Atkinson (2007) study.

Adding value

The three standard interview questions are designed to add value to the research interaction thus far. Specifically:

- **Question 1:** *What does this diagram of the 'psychological contract' say to you?*

Rationale: Emphasise 'diagram' (more conversational than terms such as 'model' or 'metaphor'); 'psychological contract' in 'inverted' commas in order to suggest that no one fixed definition of the model is being imposed – the term is open to criticism; 'say to you', prompting patterns of discourse that might be analysed.

Objectives: Prompt explicit sense-making (Robson, 2002); elicit emic, 'local' / individual knowledge (cf. Tan et al, 2007; Geertz, 1983); invite queries about the explicit and implicit discourse patterns suggested by the model.

- **Question 2:** *How do you interpret the role of 'trust' in this diagram?*

Rationale: The individual reflections on 'trust' prompted by Q1 are now conceptualised abstractly in *Figure 1*; the emphasis on 'interpret' invites an open, response, while reference to 'role' connects with the functional feature-oriented terminology of psychological contract research (cf. Conway & Briner, 2007).

Objectives: Prompt free interpretation (cf. Miles & Huberman, 1994): challenge 'zero definitions' of trust common in established conceptualisations of the contract; build on each interviewee's experience of Q1.

- **Question 3:** *Can you relate the contextualisation of 'trust' in this diagram to your own experiences of employment in your current or in a former organisation?*

Rationale: Inviting an open-ended response highlighting the perceived relevance (or otherwise) of trust in each interviewee's 'concrete experience' (Kolb, 1984): i.e. in relations to and with current or former employers.

Objectives: Elicit and explore the perceived *relevance* of trust to each respondent's experience of international employment and career development; promote shared learning; elicit and explore 'an international employee perspective on trust in the psychological contract'; inform future IHRM research and practice.

Note: The questions come before the diagram (*Figure 1*) in order to allow the respondents space to begin formulating their responses before having their reflections channelled within the boundaries of the model.

Combining professional learning and data triangulation

Although the latter set of interview objectives are designed to support processes of professional learning and development, another immediate concern is their potential to reduce threats to validity. Unlike with Q1 the employees as interviewees have space and time to select their own responses in relation to

trust. Furthermore, the explicit prompting using three standard questions should support research reliability – initially, at least. Re-invoking *Figure 5* processes of triangulation in pursuit of individual employee perceptions of ‘truth’ are engaged: e.g. ‘Self’ (the interviewee); ‘Other 1’ (the researcher as initiator of the interview); ‘Other 2’, freely interpreted as current and / or former employers.

In conceptual terms this triangulation dynamic connects with the andragogical ‘learning cycle’ proposed by Kolb et al (1974) and Kolb (1984), as depicted in *Figure 6*. Correspondingly, the terminology of this cycle informed the formulation of the interview objectives. For, other than an implied ‘promise’ of a professional learning opportunity (cf. Rousseau, 1990), the respondents were offered no explicit reward for their participation, unlike participants in the Robinson (1995) study who were offered a cash incentive. As suggested in chapter six, empirically testing the *Figure 1* depiction of ‘trust in the psychological contract’ might further develop the theory (cf. Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983) and simultaneously generate a source of professional learning and development for the research stakeholders involved. In both cases, the question of research(er) performance is addressed. Specifically, in reference to *Figure 6* the standard structure of each interview might be re-formulated as follows:

- *Phase 1:* Respondent encounters a tangible, hard copy depiction of ‘the psychological contract’. Echoing Denzin (1998:192), this design re-contextualises the ‘trust’ concept previously encountered in Q1.
- *Phase 2:* The pre-set questions guide the respondents towards a ‘reflective observation’ / retrospection on their own and other people’s behaviour and experience. The three questions imply hypotheses about trust, as in explicit references to ‘role’ and the prompt this implies towards ‘assimilating’ the ‘abstract conceptualisation’ in their hand to ‘concrete’ or real world ‘experiences’ of employment; explicitly, this conceptualisation guides the respondents towards a ‘convergent’ consideration of their own observed ‘consequences’ of ‘trust in the psychological contract’.
- *Phase 3:* Respondents reinterpret the metaphor relevant to their own experience: some form of ‘accommodation’ is achieved – though not in line with any predetermined outcome of the researcher’s design, and only made explicit if the interviewee chooses to do so.

- *Phase 4*: Respondents become aware of how the metaphor might be interpreted from diverse perspectives. They have space to invoke current and former employers, diverging from their current experience as interviewees towards 'reflective observations' on the behaviour of employers general to their professional experience. Through inferred processes of assimilation, convergence and accommodation the interviewees re-connect with their current experience as a research interviewee. The thoughts they generate through this inferred cycle might be shared or not shared: the objective here is that some experience of individual learning occurs. The extent to which this is shared relies in the first instance on what information the respondent offers and is recorded by the researcher.
- *Phase 5 > 1* (repeat cycle): The data that *is* shared becomes summarised by the researcher and subsequently input into the data validation process. By now both interviewer and interviewees are removed in time and place from the original learning context. The summary data stand as a record of 'concrete experience' that, when further reflected upon, can prompt the learning cycle to turn again.

Echoing Phillips and Pugh (2006), from a researcher perspective the validation process becomes cyclical and expanded as the testimony from each case study is augmented by cyclical data from other respondents. The process outcomes form a basis upon which the researcher might seek to propose generalised statements about what she/he has learnt about international employee perspectives on trust in the psychological contract.

Trustworthy research?

Highlighting the potential for shared learning might serve to justify the type of structured research interventions discussed in this chapter. Research validity is assumed by maintaining a clear and recorded focus on the meanings that interviewees choose explicitly to attribute to trust: *observer, non imager* (Comte, 1974). Research reliability might be tested more accurately if other researchers / interviewers were drafted in to apply the same interview structure. However, resources did not allow for this, hence the enduring threat to reliability. As with other such ethnographic studies the reliability test finds primary expression in the consistency and self-discipline of the researcher and in the consistency and stability of the interview sample (cf. Gold, 1997). This is assumed to be a 'naturalistic' position (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For, as Guba and Lincoln (1989:307) posit: 'It is a mistake to expect corroboration of one

investigator by another'. This holds true even in ethnographic research events as structured as these interviews.

The 'professional learning' claim highlighted above and in chapter six might appear to lend some ethical justification for the relatively structured framework within which respondents are invited to reflect on their experiences and provide data in relation to 'trust'. Invoking the ABI model (*Figure 2*) the extent to which the chosen research approach might be perceived as *trustworthy* is likely to be demonstrated in the interviewer's relative competence along with interviewee perceptions of his / her benevolence and integrity. As might be expected with semi-structured interviews the nature of the interviewee response remains individualised and open-ended. After introducing the initial framing structure of each interview, the primary 'locus of control' that the interviewer can seek to influence interviewee perceptions from manifests itself in how he / she appears to respond to what each interviewee says, and what she / he records for data validation purposes. As in all forms of language production, word selection and combination is influenced inevitably by researcher bias (cf. Chomsky, 1965).

Researcher performance: worked example

Five members of the HKFG volunteered to take part in the semi-structured interviews. The following is a verbatim extract of a response from a forty-year-old female HR manager – subsequently coded here for confidentiality's sake as 'HK1'. At the time of the interview she was working on setting up HRM systems for her employer - a Hong Kong-based manufacturer - within a newly established production plant in Mainland China.

'Trust is centrally positioned in the psychological contract. Each company has its organizational culture. According to its culture, a system is set up to maintain HRM policy and practice by the management. Employers have an expectation on employees including years of experience, working abilities, value of contribution.

In the meantime, employees also have an expectation on employers' commitment including working conditions, remuneration and benefits. If the basic terms are fulfilled, employees will be devoted to the job where they can get job satisfaction.

Trust means mutual beliefs, perceptions, and obligation. Fair treatment to employees will earn good feedback. Employees are more loyal and hardworking, and even developed into ambitious mind and multitasking.

Talking about my experience on present organization, all staff other than those laid off had salary cut of 5% due to "deficit" in the Tsunami period. When the organization turned "deficit" into "profit", our boss thanked our support during hardship by giving us good bonus and big trip.'

Schematically the prompted and perceived centrality of trust in the processes of employer/ employee exchange outlined above invoke an individual employee perspective on the future-orientation of an employment relationship building on past experience, current perception and future expectation of reward, thus linking with the experiential learning cycle (*Figure 6*). Further context is given by the attribution of distinct roles to the self, to other employees ('us' / 'other 1') and 'our boss': a triangulation dynamic emerges (cf. *Figure 5*). A broader business context is suggested in the apparent acceptance that economic circumstances might arise where the contract with some employees might need to be broken or terminated. As an IHRM practitioner HK1 appears comfortable expressing her views and experiences within the framework of the psychological contract; she appears relaxed about making explicit reference to 'trust' – in English, at least. By subsequently volunteering to participate in the conversations about trust this respondent appeared willing to invest time in the research process in order to accrue some benefit in terms of professional learning and development. The extent to which this example response might be regarded as 'typical' is further explored below.

7.2 Coding

The extent to which HK1's testimony might represent an average or even typical response within the given interview structure can be ascertained to a degree by means of data coding. Coding is a process whereby field notes from qualitatively oriented interviews are transcribed into units of meaning, ensuring that the 'relations between the parts (remains) intact' (Miles & Huberman, 1994:56). The purpose is to facilitate the communication of field data to a non-participating

audience and to support analysis that might allow patterns of response to be identified, highlighted and interpreted. In short, 'coding is analysis' (Miles & Huberman, 1994:56), a practical illustration of which is presented in *Appendix II*. Specifically, the data coding process serves to connect with processes specific to research design, building on the literature reviews and the preliminary studies. As with these research design features, coding helps empirical researchers arrange primary (verbatim) data into coherent patterns and thus serve in pursuit of the stated research objective.

As with all processes of data selection, reorganisation and analysis, there are constant threats to reliability on account of researcher bias – and simple fallibility or incompetence; hence, the emphasis reinforced in this chapter to measures of 'trustworthy' research. Drawing specifically on the Tan et al (2007) study the process of coding data from the semi-structured interviews can be contextualised (spatially by the model and temporally during the interview and data validation processes) as follows:

- Etic position: the context given by reference to the model of the psychological contract
- Etic > Emic position: the coding of data by the researcher straddles across respondent data sets
- Emic position: each respondent responds to a summative data report prepared by the researcher and thereby feeds into the data validation process
- Emic-Etic position: the researcher seeks to generalise from individual sets of emic data in order to identify diverse meanings attributed to trust
- Etic position: the coded data are presented independently of respondent participation in an attempt to generalise and develop on existing theories of the psychological contract, specifically by developing 'an international employee perspective on trust'.

This shifting of research perspectives equates to what O'Brien (1993) describes as the triangulated application of theory: 'theories are like the lenses of the kaleidoscope; when you slot different ones into place things you could not see before suddenly become visible; patterns that were indistinct become sharper'

(1993:11) - an effect, I maintain, that might be achieved by applying a 'global' mindset to trust research (cf. Sparrow et al, 2004; Steers et al, 2010).

7.3 Data analysis (1)

Having indentified a relevant research purpose (chapter one), located it in existing research (chapters two to four), rehearsed and finally integrated it into an appropriate design (chapters five and six) before ultimately beginning to enact it (here), it is time to focus on the analysis of the primary data that form the core contribution of this study. In preparation for the analytical process the explicit elements of *Figure 1* were re-coded: the result appears as *Appendix II*. In my combined role as interviewer / researcher I noted each time one of the pre-coded items was mentioned in the interviewee's response to Question 1:

- *What does this diagram of the 'psychological contract' say to you?*

Drawing on the review of psychological contract research (chapter three) the primary code / discourse pattern being listened out for was:

HR Policies / HR practices + trust + organisational commitment
(*in code*) POL & PRAC + TRUST + COM

This discourse pattern is implied in the propositional three-stage structure of the model. It also echoes the basic *S + V + O* discourse pattern established in Q1. As illustrated in chapter three and subsequently during the preliminary studies (cf. Bijlsma & Van de Bunt, 2003), this might be interpreted reflexively along the lines of:

- *If employees perceive HR policies and practices as trustworthy, employees will commit to the organisation.*

Both Bijlsma and Van de Bunt (2003) and Tzafrir (2005) draw on the Mayer et al (1995) integrative ABI model (*Figure 2*) in order to elicit and frame what they claim are 'antecedents' to employee perceptions of another employee's / manager's trustworthiness. In answer to Question 1 interviewees in this current

study made initial and explicit mention of concepts such as ‘relationship’, ‘organisation’, ‘promise’ and ‘experience’, coded (in parentheses) as (REL), (ORG), (PROM) and (EXPER) respectively. These related yet (to *Figure 1*) extraneous items are also listed in *Appendix II*.

i) Frequency

Across the interview sample ($n = 45$) the re-coded items most frequently mentioned by respondents explicitly in answer to Question 1 were:

- TRUST = 75
- FAIR = 38
- (ORG) = 35

Across the interview sample ($n = 45$) the re-coded items most frequently mentioned in answer to Question 1 were:

- (ORG) = 15
- (REL) = 14
- FAIR = 6
- TRUST = 5
- CAUS = 4
- (PROM) = ‘promise’ = 1

The total mentioning of re-coded items gives some indication of the points of salience along with the patterns of expectation that respondents bring to their encounter with *Figure 1*. In this context mention of ‘trust’ – as the research focus – becomes commonly substituted by reference to ‘it’, thus making recording problematic: the international trust research interviewer needs to be a ‘good’ or attentive ‘listener’ (cf. Schneider & Barsoux, 2003; Briscoe et al, 2009).

Correspondingly, it is noteworthy that the most commonly referenced items do not appear explicitly in *Figure 1*. This suggests a natural inclination for respondents to contextualise what they read from the model to their own or a more generalised sets of experiences – as predicted in *Figure 6* (cf. Kolb, 1984) and as manifested in the popular invocation of (ORG). In other words, an initial impression is that respondents seek to make the model relevant to their own experience. When given the space to do so, they will take this opportunity.

The total mentioning of re-coded items in the initial position of a response gives some indication as to how respondents connect with the model while beginning to reflect on their own experiences and expectations – expectations that, in reference to *Figure 6*, might correspond to *Phase 3*. This expresses a propensity towards ‘divergence’ - as in ‘looking awry’ at the model / problem as presented (cf. Albert, 1978; Western, 2008) - and, with or without the prompt or intervention of a trust researcher, a propensity towards ‘reflexivity’ (cf. Möllering, 2006a). This inference is based on the psycho-linguistic insight that the organisation of human memory tends to highlight the initial morphemes of a word or phrase (Aitchison, 1987). The S + V + O structure implied in anticipation of interviewee responses to *Question 1* support this approach in terms of emphasising the ‘I’: i.e. the potential for subjective assimilation of and reflection on the relevant item, and this across cultures for ethnographic research (cf. Choi & Han, 2009). Significant here is the insight that, despite the prompt focussing on TRUST in the first interview question and in the respondent’s prior expectation about the interview, a majority of interviewees chose to begin their response with terms not explicit in the model: i.e. (ORG), (REL) and (significantly, though less frequently) FAIR. Applying insights from Kolb et al (1974) and Erikson (1994) these international employees appear to be seeking a ‘locus’ of (interpretative) ‘control’ beyond what they perceive in and of *Figure 1* – and of how it adds to their understanding of professional experience. Echoing Tennyson (1999) cited at the top of this chapter, the words offered by these international employees appear both to ‘reveal’ and ‘conceal’ each one’s deepest or most personally remembered experiences and concurrently evolving expectations of the employment relationship. These experiences and expectations appear as

input or 'cause' factors in *Figure 1* – the figure already appears challenged to accommodate them.

ii) Patterns of discourse

Concerned that the initial streams of data were beginning already to render *Figure 1* redundant, a discourse analysis was conducted building on the S+V+O discourse pattern implied in the model. Echoing Robson (2002), a systematic sampling was conducted of every fifth from the total of 45 interviews coded. The nine most frequent three-item combinations linked explicitly in one phrase by interviewees in response to Question 1 were:

(PROM) + (EXPER) + FAIR; CAUS + CONT + CONQ; (INDEP) + TRUST + FAIR;
FAIR + TRUST + FAIR; (ORG) + TRUST + (PROM); (ORG) + (REL) + (ORG); (REL)
+ CONT + CONQ; TRUST + TRUST + (PROC); (REL) + CAUS + CONQ

Out of these patterned three-item responses, the most common sequence of concepts in response to Question 1 is a combination of *either*:

(ORG) + TRUST + FAIR

or:

(REL) + TRUST + CONQ

Resources restraints meant that the question as to whether these patterns reflect thought or eye-movements across *Figure 1* and the appended interview questions could not be answered reliably. Having decided on a strategy of data validation it would seem flippant to invite respondents to recall and describe the interaction between their eye and thought movements when answering Question 1: in my view, another reason for trust researchers to devote more systematic attention to processes of human perception.

iii) Clarification requests

Across the interview sample ($n = 45$) the items most frequently highlighted for need of further clarification (?) were:

- *Organisational commitment* (COM?) – 23 queries
- *Delivery of the deal* (DEAL?) – 12 queries
- *Alternatives* (ALT?) – 7 queries
- *Motivation* (MOT?) – 5 queries
- *Organisational citizenship* (CIT?) – 3 queries

Requests for clarification are significant for, as with 'zero definitions' of trust, they highlight boundaries of assumed meaning; they also highlight research bias and / or overconfidence. It is difficult to discern significant patterns in the abridged ranking above. Significant with COM is the focus on potential consequences / outcomes from the contract: as discussed in chapters three and four, 'commitment' as a theme (e.g. in relation to 'loyalty') appears to strike a chord from a respondent / employee perspective, as does the antecedent connection made to DEAL – a salience apparently shared by IHRM practitioners (cf. Harris et al, 2003; Raeder & Grote, 2005; Jackson, 2010a). This inference is explored in more detail in chapter eight.

Alternatively, the queries for clarification might say more about a research failing: e.g. the interview task being perceived as insufficiently clear. However, the evidence thus far suggests that the integrity of 'trust' as an element exclusive to the 'content' box appears already under threat.

iv) Individualised patterns of interpretation

As evinced in the initially uncoded '()' items this particular sample of respondents appeared consistently unfettered by the structure and boundaries of the research design – a recognition that emerged in respect of Q1 also. This line of 'reflective observation' (Kolb, 1984) also begins to ask whether 'trust' might be released from its 'content box' location and allowed to float more freely in the broader contextual space denoting the 'employment relationship'. Here is one example from respondent T1 (Turkish, female, 37, project team leader):

(REL) + POL & PRAC + FAIR + TRUST + DEAL + MOT + EXPER + (ORG) + (ORG) +
TRUST + COM? + SAT + TRUST + DEAL

This response was roughly paraphrased and subsequently validated by the respondent herself during the validation process. It emerged as:

The relationship with employers and senior managers is important. Employees compare what decisions they make and how they effect them - that's this 'HR policies and practices' in the model here. Professional people want to be treated fairly. They expect to understand why senior managers make decisions that affect them - this builds trust. The 'deal' (as it says here) is that those people who work hard get rewarded. This hasn't always been my experience and so at times I feel demotivated. I know how valuable my experience is to the organisation. I don't trust some senior managers to recognise that. Once I quit the organisation - is that this 'commitment' thing? - and went to work for a competitor in (another city). I was better paid there and for a time felt more satisfied. Trust wasn't a problem there: I did my job well, they paid me well: that was the simple deal there.

T1's perceptions and experiences are expanded on in the conversations reported in chapter eight, where she is cited in discussion with a younger female colleague (T4) about organisational commitment and trust.

7.4 Data analysis (2):

If a respondent appears able to reformulate their understanding of a particular concept in their own as opposed to researcher-led terms, the researcher / auditor might assume a sophisticated level of respondent comprehension and assimilation that might act as a foundation for realisation of the model in the real world experience of the respondent: i.e. paraphrasing as evidence of some 'congruence of expectations' between individual respondents and a generalised community of scholar-practitioners. The space, time and opportunity generated by the data validation process are key here, as the one party appears to assimilate the terminology and discourse patterns of the other.

Consequently, the responses to Question 2 and the 'role' readily attributed to trust in conceptualisations of the psychological contract, generated the following paraphrases of the model:

- *Trust is clearly important - has an important role. It's here in the middle of the diagram. Everything seems to flow through it. CH1 (Swiss, male, 49, senior engineer)*

- *Trust side of the contract is attached a lot of importance as it is in the centre of everything happening between you and me – the employer and the employee* **T2** (Turkish, male, 44, HR manager)
- *Trust gains importance the more management task one has.* **CH2** (Swiss, female, 42, department head, public sector)
- *Trust improves performance. The link to fairness of internal employment. Predetermining candidates prior to the official selection time undermines trust'. (Researcher: What do mean by 'predetermining'?). I mean favouritism. I apply for a job internally, have a selection interview, and find out later that the job was already given to a favourite of the boss.* **T3** (Turkish, female, 38, project team leader)
- *Trust – the most important thing. Without trust nothing can happen. With trust more space for innovation, commitment. Implicit (is) that party would deliver this contract. Can't get trust at once. Need time to have trust towards others. While doing internship, important was the free space, not a lot of control – the possibility to show what I can do.* **P1** (Polish, female, 27, marketing assistant)
- *Fairness and trust are not said explicitly. But the culture teaches you in the long term. It's implicit. (Researcher: You mean the role of trust is implicit?) Yes, like delivery of the deal. No consistency in implementation of deliver the deal means no fairness, and soon no trust. If big words such as mission statements are not implemented (then) frustration is caused and demotivation. You feel cheated. Trust and fairness can be measured. Loss of trust can be measured. It's like marriage.* **J1** (Japanese, male, 47, production manager)

At this stage a brief comparison in coding can be constructed between extracted responses to Questions 1 and 2. Here is one example, comparing the extracted testimonies of T1 in response to Question 1 and J1 in response to Question 2:

T1 (Turkish, female, 37, project team leader):

(REL) + POL & PRAC + FAIR + TRUST + DEAL + MOT + EXPER + (ORG) + (ORG) + TRUST + COM? + SAT + TRUST + DEAL + CIT? + (ORG)

J1 (Japanese, male, 47, production manager)

FAIR + TRUST + CULT + DEAL + DEAL + FAIR + MOT + TRUST + FAIR + TRUST + (REL)

Echoing Miles and Huberman (1994:57) the patterned 'clustering' of coded concepts 'sets the stage for drawing conclusions' – some of these are outlined below. For now a superficial comparison of the concept clusters presented above suggest that J1 appears to relate the concept of trust more widely beyond the terms of the model, as prompted by Question 2. The lack of clarification seeking – as opposed to researcher offering – is also evident in J1's testimony. This perhaps highlights J1's sense of familiarity with the model gleaned from answering Question 1. The common linkage between TRUST, FAIR and DEAL is apparent in both, and consistent in other testimonies. Apparent also is a drift away from focus on TRUST to related themes, perhaps reflecting the progression from experience of questionnaire Q1 to interview Question 1 and, together, perhaps representing an expression of interest in making trust relevant to each respondent's experience of employment.

Drawing on the Japan preliminary study the emphasis J1 gives to CULT might explain the difference in emphasis given by T1 to the more concrete concept of (ORG). This might express a different experience of HRM / organisational cultures: e.g. that Japanese-style HRM tends to emphasise organisational culture rather than structure. However, there is evidence that the 'family' element in organisational culture is common to both East and West Asian contexts for employment (cf. Tan et al, 2007; Aycan & Yavuz, 2008; Wasti et al, 2010). Here T1 appears to interpret (ORG) more as employer and a place to work and as a context for DEAL. The DEAL element is also strong in the J1 account. For reasons evident in her testimony, T1 emphasises the implied (REL) element of the contract at the beginning of the piece: she quit her former employer under a cloud before retiring: notions of contract 'breach' might be inferred. In contrast, J1 gives end-of-text emphasis on (REL). This emphasis was inferred in this case by the researcher from the phrase 'it's like marriage' - an inference subsequently validated by J1 himself. The lack of clear consistency here in relation to national cultural identity appears to re-open the controversy explored in the preliminary studies; it also appears to invite a more open-ended and in-depth exploration – an opportunity embraced in chapter eight.

7.5 Interim findings

From the brief analysis presented above the following (tentative) conclusions appear valid in respect of Questions 1 and 2:

- Respondents do not appear to feel bound by the discourse sequence proposed explicitly *Figure 1*
- Respondents apparently prefer to anchor their response to Question 1 with concepts implicit as opposed to explicit in the psychological contract model: e.g. (ORG) and (REL)
- Respondents appear willing to allow TRUST an explicit and central position as an element of CON (content) – given that TRUST is the explicit research focus, some degree of social desirability might be evident here
- Respondents appear willing to interpret TRUST in relation to other CON elements such as FAIR: i.e. both vertical as well and horizontal (including reverse) patterns of interpretation emerge, despite the one-way (left-to-right) linearity made explicit in the model
- There is limited evidence for interpreting and locating TRUST outside its designated CON ‘box’: e.g. in the space that might be designated (REL)
- This said, respondents do appear willing to accept some flow of causality connecting context-giving input(s) such as (REL) or (ORG) to outcomes (CONQ)

The selection of responses chosen to illustrate interview responses to Question 2 appears to affirm the central importance of trust in the model, as illustrated in T2’s testimony (above). However, responses from CH1 (above) might suggest some degree of a social desirability effect (cf. Dean & Whyte, 1958) and / or genuine and elicited concern and experience on the part of the respondent (cf. Gold, 1997). Specific interpretations of a ‘role’ for trust appear to prompt associations with people as agents or actors in the interpretation and (by implication) negotiation of trust in the contract (T2, P1). There also appears to be an interpretative link made between TRUST and task / management responsibility: e.g. ‘management task’ (CH2). This implied enactment of the ‘role’ of trust appears to extend to processes of management choice and decision-making: e.g. in terms of delegating tasks to employees at a particularly formative stage of their career (P1). Correspondingly, trust becomes compared with

notions of 'fairness' and the 'delivery of the deal' – notably perceptions / experiences of 'unfair' treatment in HRM attitudes and behaviours (T3) – an insight that supports the attention given to perceptions of breach in contract research (cf. Robinson, 1995). The explicit linking of TRUST and performance appears relatively rarely across interviews, thus mirroring the apparent lack of research input into this potential and - from an IHRM practitioner perspective - highly significant linkage (cf. Sparrow, 2008).

Again relevant here is the primary - and unsolicited - salience given to REL and ORG in relation to TRUST, reinforcing the suggestion that future contract research might consider locating the 'employment relationship' in the space surrounding the three boxes contained within the outer box interpreted 'the organisation'. Converging these two anchoring concepts might account for the common assignation of an agency role to ORG evident in contract research: e.g. 'the organisation takes pride in my work' (Conway, 1999). Interpreted thus, the organisation appears 'anthropomorphised' into an actor (trustor / trustee) negotiating the employment relationship with individual employees (cf. Conway & Briner, 2007; Rousseau, 1990). And overall, highlighting the question of a 'role' for trust in the psychological contract appears to prompt a perception of dynamism ('trust as process') and of agency among respondents, eliciting their diverse perspectives on how key actors in negotiation of the contract might assume roles over time and relative to task / specific context for responsibility. TRUST might thus serve to label a context- or situation-specific perception or set of experiences through which parties to in (ORG)-based (REL)s interpret their own roles / identities and those of other people (cf. Kurihara, 2006). However, in positing such insights the limited size of the sample should be emphasised, together with the limited space-time allowed for interviewee responses and data validation.

7.6 Relating the model to professional experience

The third standard question structuring the interviews asks respondents:

- *Can you relate the contextualisation of 'trust' in this diagram to your own experiences of employment in your current or in a former organisation?*

By researcher inference this question connects explicitly to the initial stage in the learning cycle depicted in *Figure 6*. This question is designed to invite open-ended responses on the theme of TRUST in the context of interpreting (REL). Reference to 'current or former' organisations prompts and invites respondents to consider and compare their experiences of TRUST beyond any one (ORG), as suggested by *Figure 1*. This insight reinforces the spatial anchoring of TRUST. Linking implicitly back to *Figures 5* and *6*, Question 3 looks ahead to chapter eight and the more individualised anchoring of the Self ('I') employee perspective on decisions to quit or stay with a particular employer / (ORG), thereby connecting with Turnley and Feldman (1999) and Si et al (2009), as reviewed jointly in chapter four.

Coding revisited

Respondent answers to Question 3 tended to be (*as per design*) open-ended. This made accurate coding difficult. Consequently, the coding system introduced for Question 1 became the basis upon which to summarise field notes – both simultaneous to the interview and as expanded on soon after the interview. These summaries were sent to each respondent for validation. For the sake of consistency and research reliability the respondent's own words were rendered using the standard S + V + O phrase structure encountered in Q1, where 'S' appeared as 'you', thus emphasising respondent ownership of what 'I' (as researcher) had understood the interviewee to have said (cf. Miles & Huberman, 1994:57). Some items mentioned by the respondent were highlighted *verbatim* using 'inverted commas' in order to emphasise respondent ownership of the text and promote further responses for clarification. As emphasised in chapter six, there was no obligation for interviewees to respond beyond acknowledging receipt of the summary. Here are two examples:

- *You spoke about your former boss. You said she was too controlling and did not seem to think about trust. You said it was a matter of her personality and that this was something you realised after some time working under her in the organisation. You suggested her attitude was because she believed that her boss did not trust her* (Researcher summary to IND1: Indian, female, 34, marketing manager)

- *You spoke about a former manager who gave you the freedom to work at home. This was because you lived some distance from your place of employment. You spoke about another manager you worked next to who encouraged his employees to support him to reach a definite decision. You described this approach as employees being 'a kind of consultant' to their boss. You suggested that this was a positive experience of trust for you, even though you did not directly experience this 'consultancy approach' yourself (Researcher summary to CH3: Swiss, male, 35, purchasing manager)*

Data validation

Of the forty-five participants involved in the semi-structured interviews thirty-two returned an Email response beyond 'thank you'. These thirty-two offered evidence of further reflection on TRUST and on other questions related to the psychological contract; fifteen of the thirty-two suggested changes or additions to the testimony sent to them – a response pattern that might have been researched more thoroughly (e.g. 'Why did you choose to change this item?') had the overall intention not been to proceed beyond the semi-structured interviews to the conversation stage of the research process. In effect, all responses received served to move the relevance of the interview focus through time and location towards new contexts for data elicitation and analysis. Consequently, the validation process in respect of the semi-structured interviews began to adopt more independence as an ethnographic 'report' or exchange rather than a semi-structured summary of a one-off research situation (cf. Gold, 1997). The following extract comprising my summary sent to HK1 – introduced above in this chapter as interlocutor in the first 'worked example' – illustrates this transition towards a more open-ended researcher-respondent exchange:

- *You spoke about your relationship to your current (Japanese) boss. You suggested he relies on you to help him communicate with the Hong Kong and Mainland staff. This is important and your organisation is increasingly moving production to the Mainland. Your fluency in Cantonese, Mandarin and Japanese helps you to support your boss. You told me he also relies on you to check on his dealing with any English language business communications that are important. This gives you the status as 'unofficial PA' to your boss. You said that your relationship with your boss is about trust and that, as a consequence, you feel a great loyalty towards your boss and to the organisation. You've been working with this organisation for fifteen years now, which – as you told me – is unusual in Hong Kong today.*

This is an extract from HK1's *verbatim* response to the above summary:

- *Talking about trust, I am sure there's trust building in employee relationship. If the boss does not trust staff, he will be under great pressure, either do it himself or worry too much. If staff do not trust boss, he will disobey instructions or work unpleasantly. Mutual trust is a shared belief that either one can depend on each other to achieve a common purpose. However, it is built under a "system" no matter whatever and it depends on corporate culture. We have to aware of cultural differences and understand each other in order to establish a positive working environment. Take Japanese Company as an example. Team building is the corporate culture. Staff have to share "trust" and bear the accountability for the consequences altogether.*

Applying the coding conventions established in summarising answers to Questions 1 and 2, the following analysis can be made of the HK 1's response to the summary of her Question 3 answers:

TRUST + TRUST (building) + (REL) + TRUST (negative) + TRUST (negative) +
 TRUST ('mutual') + TRUST ('it') + (SYST*) + CULT ('corporate') + CULT
 ('differences') +
 (ORG = 'working environment') + (ORG = 'Japanese') +
 (TEAM*) +
 CULT ('corporate') + TRUST ('shared') + CONQ

Evident here is an array of respondent data that goes beyond the coding system imposed by the researcher, as illustrated in the differentiated interpretations of the items TRUST and CULT. Indeed, even in this short extract the beginnings of a TRUST-typology appear, analogous to that commonly pursued by the specialist trust researchers reviewed in chapter two. Furthermore, new and unpredicted items appear. For example, (TEAM*) and (SYST*) or 'system' appear key to HK1's experience and perception of trust. One interim research conclusion is thus: by examining and sharing data from the semi-structured interviews rich interpretations of TRUST become explicit - a phenomenon that might inform more differentiated or finely-tuned coding in future research interventions (cf. Bijlsma & Van de Bunt, 2003).

7.7 Discussion

Several findings emerge out of the data analysis presented in this chapter, several of which have already been highlighted. Looking back to the stated research objective three particular findings deserve further development. Firstly, respondents appear to accept TRUST as a central element governing the coherence implied in the 'three-box' model of the psychological contract. However, here it must be remembered the explicit prompting to consider 'trust' expresses researcher bias towards attributing it visual salience as a core 'content' element in *Figure 1*. Thus, from a practitioner perspective this insight is of limited value. However, it does support the critical questions arising out of the literature review developed in chapter three.

Secondly, having established TRUST as a relevant focal point for initial interpretation of the model respondent accounts of how the psychological contract 'works' around TRUST commonly emphasise elements only implied in *Figure 1*; notably, (ORG) and / or (REL). As such, suggesting that TRUST might be interpreted as both a process and as a phenomenon freed from the conceptually fixed boundaries of 'content' appears to offer a valid path for future research - a proposal that finds support in the preliminary studies, where questions arose about assuming a universal validity of western scholarly conceptualisations and English language interpretations of TRUST in contexts for cross-cultural research, as exemplified by 信. Prospects for further research in this direction are explored in chapter nine.

Thirdly, and even when focussing respondent attention on TRUST, the concept itself becomes commonly interpreted and (at times) subsumed in relation to other items arranged vertically around TRUST in the model: e.g. FAIR and DEAL. This is consistent with established traditions of conceptual contract research (cf. Robinson, 1995; Marchington et al, 2001; Rousseau, 2001; Guest & Conway, 2002). However, once again there appears some encouragement to extend these established and primarily unicultural streams of research to encompass cross-cultural research into TRUST and the psychological contract (cf. Si et al, 2009; Debroux, 2010b). As suggested in chapter six, useful lessons might be drawn from international and cross-cultural marketing / relations management (cf.

Mühlbacher et al, 1999; Egan 2001). To illustrate, Usunier (2002) claims that the German prefix 'ver-' as in *Vertrauen* ('trust') suggests a propensity to start relationships from a position of scepticism or caution, with trust and / or perceptions of fairness being conditional on observed reciprocity. Furthering the speculation, this claim might be explored in conjunction with Hofstede's (1980) 'uncertainty avoidance' (UA) dimension, within which 'the Germans' score highly relative to members of other 'national' cultures such as the United States and Hong Kong. Echoing Conway and Briner (2007) these findings might inform how HRM researchers and practitioners might choose to describe, explain and predict the salience and role of trust in the psychological contract. These empirical insights might support a more international / cross-cultural perspective on the literature reviewed in chapter three.

In sum, there is rich potential in extending the types of cross-cultural and empirical trust research exemplified in chapter four (cf. Tan et al, 2007; Wasti et al, 2010). More specifically, there appears to be a case for developing what in this current study has been termed 'an international employee' perspective on TRUST generally and on 'trust in the psychological contract' specifically. Building on the experiences of Q1 and other preliminary studies the cross-cultural nature of the research interaction described in this current chapter raises and leaves open questions as to how far nationality, age and gender are relevant when researching trust among international employees – an endeavour developed further in chapter eight.

Challenging existing boundaries and approaches

For now it can be argued that the insights generated by the semi-structured interviews suggest an overlapping and at times synonymous role between TRUST as content and related concepts such as FAIR (trust as perception?) and 'delivery of the deal' (trust as process?). Such speculation supports insights and critical positions developed during the course of the literature reviews. To illustrate, Rousseau, (2001) and Raja et al (2004) define trust as 'a personality characteristic' of individual employees, allegedly shaping how they are likely to perceive promises made by the employer and express their own expectations.

The prominence attributed by respondents to (REL) and (ORG) in these interviews gives context to this definition. As stated in chapter three, Herriot and Pemberton (1997) are two of few contract researchers who emphasise trust as a strategic HRM resource. By inference, this view appears supported in HK1's comments that 'Staff have to share "trust" and bear the accountability for the consequences altogether'. Correspondingly, the apparently obsessive focus among western contract researchers on 'breach' (e.g. of TRUST) appears overblown. The breach question is latent in the interview data presented here: e.g. HK1's modal emphasis on 'having to'. Echoing Möllering (2006a), more empirical research attention might be given to the routine expectations, perceptions and experiences that appear to frame how trust is interpreted in contexts for international employment. Correspondingly, explicit reference to *distrust* parallels the above comments, and notably as an outcome from a latent perception of breach and thus - assuming iterative interpretations of the contract - as a cause of the scepticism or suspicion that an employee might bring to future negotiations of established or newly negotiated contracts (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994; Robinson, 1995; Atkinson, 2007).

Working with research definitions of trust in the psychological contract

As stated previously, this study adopts an initial interpretation of 'trust' in the psychological contract as 'a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another' (Rousseau et al, 1998:395). This definition echoes the conditions identified by Banerjee et al as 'necessary for a trusting relationship' including fundamental assumptions about social-psychological 'interdependence', individual 'vulnerability', and, when considering whether to trust or not, 'perceptions of risk' (2006:308). Furthermore, there is a case to challenge the integrity of established scholarly boundaries commonly defining 'trust in the psychological contract', notably in contexts for empirical ('real world') and longitudinal research. One source informing such challenges appears in the processes of data validation illustrated here and in the following chapter. These processes can serve to develop an international employee perspective on TRUST from both the researcher and the respondent perspectives. In this sense,

the discussion developed in this chapter connects with and extends the type of longitudinal, empirical and open-ended (e.g. diary-based) contract research conducted by Conway (1999) and recommended subsequently by Conway and Briner (2007).

Overall, the interim findings generated by the semi-structured interviews suggest adopting the type of critical approach towards working with management models and theoretical constructs invoked in Part One (cf. Western, 2008). This approach might be informed by more systematic and defined reference to processes of human *perception*. As highlighted previously, this remains an ongoing challenge to experimental, conceptual and empirical trust research and one that remains unresolved here.

On a more constructive note the data and data validation processes presented in this chapter further confirm the learning potential of working critically to management models as depicted in *Figure 1*. They appear to confirm how much might be learned from applying techniques and approaches derived from semiotics and discourse analysis to future trust and psychological contract research. For here 'the issue, perhaps, is not *whether* to use metaphor as an analysis tactic, but to be *aware* of how we – and the people we study – use it' (Miles and Huberman, 1994:250 – *original emphasis*). The experience of structuring respondent-oriented interviews around a common depiction of TRUST in the psychological contract has served to 'recognise the richness and complexity of human social experience and psychological / emotional cognition that metaphors embody and represent' (Miles & Huberman, 1994:250).

Attempts have been made in this chapter to present and analyse data that is rich and complex. Techniques used include reducing rich narrative to patterns of coded items; switching transparently between *verbatim* and paraphrased testimonies; involving the respondents in a systematic process of data validation. In contrast to the type of quantitative and qualitative data analysis conducted during the preliminary studies the outcomes from processes that seek to present rich qualitative data might appear relatively incomplete and imprecise, thus raising justified questions about their reliability. By the same token they may be

regarded as being especially valid, and hence appropriate to a research focus as inherently complex as trust. Again, Miles and Huberman (1994:252) offer encouragement here as qualitative researchers are guided towards recognising metaphors such as *Figure 1* to be useful as heuristic or 'pattern-making devices' supporting the type of coding / data analysis techniques explored in this chapter – an exercise that might serve as a reliable (e.g. consistent) approach when approaching future cross-cultural contexts for trust research.

For by involving the research respondents directly in the data analysis and validation processes a researcher can seek to 'diverge' (cf. *Figure 6*) from established or routine experience (Kolb, 1974): e.g. common applications of research models and metaphors such as the psychological contract. Instead, researchers might design in space and opportunity for multiple respondent perspectives to be expressed and shared on how established S + V + O discourse patterns and constructs such as the psychological contract (*Figure 1*) might be challenged and / or reinterpreted. Drawing again on Miles and Huberman empirical researchers might 'recognise that metaphors accrue meaning through inference' (1994:252). They might be emboldened more readily to challenge established and often uncultural scholarly claims to 'fact' or (as discussed in chapter two) 'common sense'.

As heralded in chapter one, attempting to develop 'an international employee perspective on trust in the psychological contract' represents an attempt to use management models and metaphors as 'decentering devices'. This means encouraging empirical researchers and research respondents to 'step back from the welter of observations and conversations at the field site and say, "What's going on here?" (Miles & Huberman, 1994:252). The 'stepping back' emphasises the flexibility inherent in emphasising a spatial anchoring to the research relationship: it offers a further kinetic dimension to what Western (2008), echoing Foucault (1980), terms 'looking awry' at what is claimed by experts to represent received knowledge. In more practical IHRM terms it emphasises what in chapter four was discussed in terms of expressing a developing a 'global mindset' as when demonstrating a curiosity that seeks out opportunities for learning in support of one's own and others' personal and professional growth

and development (Briscoe et al, 2009): it expresses a willingness to question the structure of problems as they stand, rethink and challenge the boundaries of what is currently accepted as 'normal', express a consistent and strategic 'locus of control' approach to both individual and team tasks (Lee-Kelley, 2006). In short, seeking to development an international employee perspective on trust in the psychological contract entails 'drawing anchor' on what might be termed an individual researcher's unicultural comfort zone (cf. Steers et al, 2010).

Limitations

The limitations of this study overall are examined in chapter nine. For now it can be noted how one key limitation already apparent is that the data presented and discussed in this chapter give no clear indication that demographic factors such as age, gender and / or (espoused) national cultural identity impact of the quality and patterns of data analysis. Perhaps the structure of the interviews does not freely accommodate the potential impact of such factors, and especially where the researcher chooses to allow the data to flow and be validated relatively openly. Perhaps the factors themselves are too general to become significant in the interview process, where the explicit input of focus - determined by the researcher, initially - is on eliciting international employee perspectives on trust in the psychological contract. Overall, the framework offered by the psychological contract appears neutral in respect of demographic variables: the emphasis here is on generic expressions of individual employee perception and interest (cf. Rousseau, 1990; Robinson, 1995; Conway, 1999; Atkinson, 2007) - a research perspective that in effect emphasises the general reliability of the model.

On this basis there is a case for the researcher / interviewer to question the respondents directly as to whether they believe that demographic variables such as gender, age and nationality are - in their own experience and observation - relevant to the meanings they attribute individually to trust. The foundation for such participation has been established in the approach taken thus far, as with the space offered by *Box 1* in Q1 and elsewhere during the preliminary studies

and, more intensively and interactively, the data validation processes described in this current chapter.

7.8 Connecting to the research conversation stage

Using data elicited in narrowly defined and controlled contexts to support generalisations about social reality stands as one of the primary purposes of - and practical challenges to - social and empirical research (Phillips & Pugh, 2006). As illustrated above, a more achievable opportunity might be found in seeking to use such data to inform processes of professional learning and development. To illustrate, as part of her response to interview Question 3 respondent T1 (cited above) suggested setting up a role-play in order to illustrate one particular experience she wanted to impress. It involved the exit interview she had been given the first time she decided to leave the employer to whom she subsequently returned. She would play herself, I would play the HR manager conducting the exit interview. We then agreed to switch roles: here I had an opportunity to reflect on and enact my experience of performance appraisal described in chapter four: 'Ah, that's what prompted you to quit so unexpectedly!' Afterwards, T1 and I returned to focus on the implications of this role-play for her answer to Question 3. The experience of the role-play became a theme in subsequent conversations about trust. Subsequently, T1 invited a former colleague to one of our conversations, discussed in chapter eight as 'developing a dual perspective on trust'.

Worked example

When a trust researcher responds by highlighting some of the claims and value-judgements made explicit in the respondent's own feedback comments, the basis for a professional and (ideally) trusting exchange is forged. To illustrate, part of the researcher response to HK1 (cited above) was:

- *You said in your last Email message that 'staff have to share "trust" and bear the accountability for the consequences altogether'. Could you give me an example of what you mean with this? Do you think there's anything*

particular to your own situation and experience here: e.g. working for a Japanese company in Hong Kong and, more recently, in the Mainland?

As mentioned previously, HK1 is an original member of the HKFG; indeed, a relatively quiet and hesitant member of this group. The above extract illustrates how she chose to interpret TRUST beyond (ORG) towards a consideration of a particular organisation's competitive business environment. This choice is relevant towards developing a context for interpretation of TRUST: i.e. for analysing trust at levels 'above and below' ORG (Currell & Inkpen, 2006). It is also relevant towards expressing and sharing the type of business insight associated with the international or global mindset in that it encourages a strategic awareness of how an individual manager's 'decisions and choices' are shaped by 'global trends and options' and exert an impact of their own making and in conjunction with choices made by other international employees and stakeholders (Briscoe et al, 2009:218). In terms of context, the open-ended structure of the interviews and, above all, the shared data validation processes ensured that the researcher could learn that HK1 works for a Japanese organisation sourced by suppliers from Taiwan. These (ORG)-specific factors are unlikely to emerge within the confines of a one-off cross-sectional interview.

Beyond our initial encounters within the HKFG HK1 proved herself to be an articulate informant (Gold, 1997) and her responses to the researcher requests for clarification and expansion during the interview data validation process became the beginning of a conversation that proceeded beyond 'boxed' conceptualisations of 'trust in the psychological contract'. Her example helped inspire the *verstehend* conversations detailed now in chapter eight.

7.9 Summary

The combination of coding, discussion and analysis presented in this chapter has explored patterns of meaning attributed to the phrase 'trust in the psychological contract' by members of sample population of international employees. Applying the contract as a metaphor has lent a spatial anchoring to the researcher-respondent relationship in the form of semi-structured interviews.

Simultaneously, this relationship has developed through time. The interviews have confirmed that interpreting TRUST exclusively as a 'content' element of contract 'content' is of limited conceptual and practical relevance – a finding that supports insights gleaned during the literature reviews of Part One.

Miles & Huberman (1994:252) advise qualitative researchers to recognise when it is time 'to stop pressing the metaphor for its juice'. Consequently, it is appropriate now to leave TRUST constrained within *Figure 1*. Rather, it is time to let interpretations float conceptually and experientially in what was defined in chapter one and here as the employment relationship: i.e. REL as relevant to employment relationships generally and, more immediately, to the third (*T3*) stage of an emerging researcher-researchee relationship.

Chapter 8: Conversations about trust

Sobald du dir vertraust, sobald weißt du zu leben

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (Faust, I)

8.0 Introduction

The conversations presented in this chapter build on the discussion and analysis in previous chapters in order to explore the significance of variables such as nationality, age and gender in shaping international employee perspectives on trust in contexts for developing, sustaining and – if preferred – terminating employment relationships. These conversations are designed to build longitudinally and ethnographically on the insights developed in chapter seven: as a *T3*-type empirical research intervention (cf. Robinson, 1996) they seek to anchor the ongoing research process individually in the perceptions, experiences and expectations of the international employees who volunteered to extend their participation this far. By applying a less structured and more open-ended (*verstehend*) conversational approach (cf. Gold, 1997; Ray, 2007) more individual employee / researchee diversity of interpretation in relation to trust is expressed. Common to emerging trends in HRM research and practice (cf. Rowley & Jackson, 2010), encouraging and working with a diversity of perspectives should support mutual learning and ongoing professional development.

8.1 Administration

Fifteen employees from the original Q1 sample volunteered to explore beyond *Question 3* of the semi-structured interviews. Paraphrasing from Gold (1997:394), the role of the researcher now becomes:

- *To learn about the lives of the respondents without passing judgement on them*
- *To act as an absolutely trustworthy recipient of candid and thoughtfully expressed accounts of experiences*

- *To act in a manner that will not knowingly cause respondents any harm or embarrassment*

Gold's invocation of 'absolutely trustworthy' is interpreted as an ambition. Given the cross-cultural context for this research, the invocation 'knowingly' to avoid causing 'harm or embarrassment to respondents' (e.g. as in causing someone to 'lose face') recalls the 'multicultural competencies' and the global mindset highlighted in chapter four (cf. Schneider & Barsoux, 2003; Steers et al, 2010). It is here that the mindsets of international employees, managers and researchers might converge, diverge, and in each case interact. Looking beyond the confines of the psychological contract, and paraphrasing from Hamel and Prahalad (1993), it is here where the original research strategy becomes 'stretched'.

The third behavioural option recommended by Gold (above) re-connects with the 'necessary conditions' for building and sustaining trusting relationships as outlined by Banerjee et al (2006). Here the researcher is challenged to demonstrate empathy towards the sense of vulnerability among respondents who offer to talk openly about decisions to quit or stay with particular employers, or share perceptions of how their contract with one or other employer might have been breached or violated: the researcher is also invited to be open about his / her own sense of vulnerability, including limits of current knowledge and (e.g. cross-cultural) competence.

Standardisation

To be fair to all respondents, and with a view towards supporting a structured and shared experience of professional learning and development, each volunteer was asked to prepare for the conversations by reflecting on the following question:

- ***Has trust ever been a factor in your decision to quit or stay with an employer?***

An explicit assurance of confidentiality was given and each respondent was invited to decide when and where the conversations should take place. The

preference tended to be for face-to-face meetings while the data validation processes established in chapter seven continued via Email or Skype™. For practical reasons the extracts presented below are selected and abridged. On average, each conversation lasted one year; at the time of writing, three are ongoing.

Reserve questions (RQs)

Echoing the Bijlsma and Van de Bunt (2003) study reviewed in chapter three the preferred approach to data generation and recording is to pose short questions and get long answers (Kvale, 1996). Unless requested, my own 'talking time' was kept to a minimum. Nonetheless, several research questions (RQs) were kept in reserve and asked whenever an opportunity arose to explore some of the aforementioned gaps in previous data sets. In respect of demographic variables, these include:

- *To what extent do you think nationality is / was a factor in your relationship to your employer / line-manager / project leader, etc?*
- *To what extent do you think being a man / woman in that situation is / was a factor?*
- *To what extent do you think age is / was a factor here?*

8.2 Male perspectives on trust

The first conversations reported here illustrate critical periods in the experience of two male employees, both of whom had entrusted their career development to their respective employers.

Respondent **G1** is German and, during the conversations, forty-four years old. He works as an IT systems manager for a large energy supply utility. He completed his apprenticeship there and appreciates the secure employment, pension and health care arrangements. As the organisation expanded and acquired overseas operations the IT service became both more peripheral and international,

offering more training requirements and opportunities. While training in the UK, **G1** completed Q1 and began the semi-structured interviews. In answer to *Question 3* he spoke of rumours coming from head office about a suggestion to outsource IT work to Eastern Europe and India. On return to Germany **G1** asked to join a research conversation. He wrote of attending a social event where his 'CEO' (division head) announced that 'currently there are no plans of IT outsourcing'. Two weeks later, **G1** emailed the following message:

- *The same CEO for IT just communicated to us by Email: "We investigate IT data centre outsourcing and requested proposals from three potential providers". I mean this is an example of mismanaging trust.*

RQ: Whose trust do you think is being mismanaged here?

G1 responded that his trust and that of other permanent IT staff - for whom he appeared to be acting as spokesperson – was being 'mismanaged': he claimed the non-permanent and non-German staff appeared to accept the rumoured change. When prompted to consider whether nationality was a factor explaining the diverse responses among staff **G1** re-emphasised that his concern focussed on the permanent team members. Asked why the works council at the employing organisation had not become involved **G1** explained that his work division had been restructured some time previously as a separate service provider and was thus no longer integrated fully into the organisational hierarchy. Several of **G1**'s closest colleagues had already decided to quit.

RQ: Are you thinking of quitting now?

- *Difficult. I want to look for other jobs, but because of the pension situation it's better to stay with the company. I will ask for a transfer to another part of the company closer to where my family is from. Problem is that the actual (= 'current') CEO would not let me to leave.*

RQ: Do you think he wants you to stay?

- *I don't know.*

RQ: Could you ask him?

- *I don't know. I feel very unhappy.*

The conversation proceeded to explore possible solutions to **G1**'s perceived dilemma.

RQ: Do you think being a man confronting another man is a factor here?

- *I'm not sure. He (the 'CEO') is a macho-type manager. But I think many managers in our company are so. Culture, I guess. He must know the pressure on my family and the families of my colleagues.*

After prompting **G1** appears to associate gender (being male) with social responsibility towards his family. This might represent a generationally biased view and one that transcends nationality, as expressed in the Q1 data. **G1** said he took the concept of 'breach' from the semi-structured interviews and applied it to his own case. By the end of the conversation cycle **G1** was still in his current post though had applied for a transfer to Northern Germany 'for family reasons'.

J4 is Japanese, forty-seven, and heads a product development team in the organisation - an electronic goods manufacturer - he joined after graduating from university. He declares himself proud of his organisation and its founding principles. **J4** joined the conversations after two of his close colleagues told him about their experience of Q1 and the semi-structured interviews. **J4** appeared hesitant at first, and particularly when, after our conversations about trust, we joined his other work colleagues for dinner. All conversations were in English and face-to-face in Tokyo, proceeding intermittently over a period of two years.

RQ: Has trust been a factor in your decision to stay with your current employer?

- *I trust my company. It has been my life and I have been able to travel and support my family all my life. We have good products, but the business and technology are changing so fast. We make more of our products in China and our job is becoming more difficult in Japan. But it is a good company. I have good friends here.*

The 'good friends' had joined the organisation at the same time and represented **J4**'s *doki*. As highlighted in chapter four in reference to Kurihara (2006) and to Schütz (1970), the temporally anchored *doki* represents a culture-specific in-group that, echoing Jandt (2010), offers 'protection in exchange for loyalty' and 'provides its members with a sense of identity'. **J4** and his *doki* expressed their identity by conversing in Kansai (i.e. non-Tokyo) dialect. Their original employer

(in Kyoto) had merged some years previously with another manufacturer headquartered in Tokyo. As managers **J4** and his *doki* had been transferred to Tokyo, leaving their families in the Kansai (*Osaka*) area. **J4** prepared for each conversation by reading up on trust and related topics in Japanese. He was informative. However, his primary personal concern appeared to become the choice of university education for his son. He wanted his son to have ‘an international education’ and asked for advice about this.

Trust returned explicitly as the primary theme for conversation after an unpredicted intervention. During one dinner with his *doki* they talked about what had motivated them to join the original organisation. **J4** cited the founding principles captured in the logo of the company: a series of lines organised around a thicker central line. His colleague from marketing told him that the logo had been changed: in fact, reduced in order to make it appear more distinctive and (jokingly) in order to ‘save ink’ (the company manufactured photocopiers). **J4** re-iterated that the core principles could not be changed and must still appear in the logo. Encouraged to check his own business card (*meishi*) **J4** recognised that the logo had indeed been changed and that two lines had been removed from the ‘founding principles’ motif. We spoke about this incident in the next conversation.

RQ: You’ve referred before to the company logo as a symbol of your loyalty. How do you think you missed the marketing decision to change it?

- *I don’t remember the change being explained to us.*

RQ: Is it still the same company for you, despite this change?

- *Really, it hasn’t been the same company since the merger. There are still two cultures in the company. And now there is more international competition. There is a discussion to close my product line and retrain us as business consultants.*

RQ: What do you think about that?

- *It’s difficult. I’m an engineer, not a business consultant.*

RQ: Do you trust your company in the same way as you did before?

- *I always look at the logo on my business card and I’m embarrassed that I did not notice the change. I believe (in) the company principles from before.*

Anyway, I could not work for another company. Another company would not employ me. And I have my family.

RQ: Would another company not employ you because of your age?

- *My age. And because I only know one company, one line of business. It is a strange feeling. But my son needs to go through university and then maybe the situation will change.*

In terms of employment **J4**'s situation appeared secure - although he recognised he might (like **G1**) face pressure to take early retirement. His longer-term and probably more acute concern about trust and loyalty appeared to be in response to current economic developments. After a sustained period of economic and employment growth the Japanese economy was finally succumbing to the effects of falling (real) GDP and the relocation of core manufacturing to markets such as China. This has impacted on youth unemployment and prospects for new career entrants (ILO, 2010). In the first two quarters of 2009 (the latter period of this conversation) unemployment in Japan increased from 4.4 to 5.2 per cent (MIC, 2009). In effect, **J4** became interested in understanding more about the 'international' dimensions of 'trust in the psychological contract' in order that he might forward on insights to his son who, echoing Sato (2007), was coming to terms with the emergent 'inequalities' of education and employment opportunity in Japan: or, what Debroux (2010b) identifies as a 'new psychological contract' in Japan. This turn of events highlights the threats arising to research validity when longitudinal surveys extend so far that the original objective and focus become 'history' (Robson, 2002:105).

8.3 Female perspectives on trust

The following conversations involve two female employees. Both are Japanese and have developed international careers. They are distinguishable from each other by age, family circumstances, and by the stage and trajectory of their career development.

When **J3** joined the preliminary studies she was forty-six and had been 'headhunted' from her long-time Japanese employer to an international credit-

rating agency. By the time she participated in these conversations she had supported her daughter through university in the UK and joined a government-funded agency set up to advise on health care reform in Japan. She was cited in the 'Japan study' detailed in chapter four.

RQ: During our discussions several years ago about 'trust' you told Tomioka-san and me that (I quote) 'there's no real incentive for female employees to trust their line-managers'. Now that you're working again for a Japanese organisation, is this still your view?

- *Yes, I think the same way. Although, I notice now that more and more Japanese women are making their own choices in life. If they are unhappy in a job, they leave. If they are unhappy in a marriage, they leave. If they have good skills, they can get good pay. And many now do not marry and so can live independently or, if they still live with their parents, they feel more confident about making their own career decisions. They can afford to.*

RQ: How are Japanese HR managers responding to this change in women's attitude?

- *It depends on the company and how successful it is. Big companies in strong markets are still very male-dominated with old-fashioned thinking. I recently gave a presentation about financing employee health care reform to one of the largest Japanese companies. I was the only woman in a room of 120 men. I know that many of their HRM staff are women. But it was the men who were delegated to attend the presentation. And it is usually men who head HR departments.*

RQ: Do you think your daughter will have similar experiences?

- *She's an architect and will make her career according to her ability. Architecture is a very creative and international business in Japan*

RQ: To what extent is trust an HRM issue in the health sector in Japan?

- *I realise that trust is more and more an issue as the processes we are advising on essentially are about managing change – change in business model, change in organisational structure and culture. It is important that people have confidence in each other's competence and ability and not take attention to their gender or age. The health sector is still very hierarchical with senior doctors – mostly male – having most influence along with financial directors and health lawyers, who are still almost exclusively male in Japan. When women – including non-Japanese women – begin to make careers in these areas then the situation – and culture – will change.*

RQ: When you reflect on the changes in your own career path, to what extent was trust a factor in your decision to quit or stay?

- *Self-trust. When the battle started with male managers I worked for realised I would not be a typical Japanese 'office flower'. I needed self-trust to continue. I set my own targets, made my own incentives. Now that my daughter has finished her education and started her own career, I feel less pressure to change my attitude. My husband has always supported me. I believe that each time I'm in a position to advise experienced male managers on what they must do to keep their organisation going, they need to see beyond me the Japanese woman and listen what is good business sense.*

In contrast, **J5** had completed Q1 during her MBA studies in the UK. She later worked for an international business consultancy in Tokyo, from where she participated in the semi-structured interviews. Soon after she elected to join a new biotech research venture set up by a (Japanese) line-manager she had worked for previously. **J5** was thirty-six when the conversations began.

RQ: Was trust a factor in your decision to quit the consultancy firm and join the new venture company?

- *I trusted my line-manager – the head of the new venture - from before. I liked the way he worked and his approach to teamwork – much better than the people I was working with in the consultancy firm. Also, my former line-manager had been able to get venture capital to start his new business, so I think his business idea was good. The decision to send me to Europe was unexpected for me. He said we needed my Europe experience to represent our company with the new project partners.*

RQ: To what extent do you think nationality was a factor in the way you trusted your former line-manager and now new boss?

- *The consultancy firm I worked for was international and very successful. But the people were too political. People always tried to get close to the boss. Some team leaders were American Japanese, who didn't really understand Japan and how to work with Japanese clients. Also, one American head I worked for had come to Tokyo from the Korea (Seoul) office and he made a very military communication style. We didn't like it and felt that we Japanese had to do most of the work and take most of the responsibility if things went wrong.*

RQ: To what extent then do you think being a woman made a difference?

- *I don't know. The main thing seemed to be that people were expected to work late and travel at weekends sometimes. I don't have family so maybe that was the important thing. I could work the same time as men.*

RQ: And what about age? Is your new boss older than you?

- *He's older than me because we worked together in a quite traditional Japanese company before and he was my boss there. But he is not much older than me. Most of my colleagues are older than me. I don't think age makes much difference. In a smaller company, more important is the work you do.*

After **J5** had been working in Europe for six months she returned to Tokyo, where the conversation continued. She talked about working with the European venture partners.

RQ: Do you think trust is important in how you relate to the international people you work with?

- *I don't know. When everyone is busy and work is going OK, I don't think about trust. I know we have some financial problem at the moment, and one main project has big delay. The investors are making problems for our boss, and I don't know how he will respond. I'm not sure how safe my job is and I'm worried about our European partners; I mean, worried that maybe we can't finish the project we started with them.*

8.4 A dual perspective on trust

The following conversations became merged as two female Turkish employees decided to form a triad conversation group. The first parts of the conversation were shared with Turkish manager (**T1**), whose testimony appeared in chapter seven. Her answer to the standard question preparing for the conversations had been 'yes'.

RQ: You told me in a previous interview how you once quit your job because you felt that your contribution wasn't being recognised or rewarded by some senior managers. You said you didn't trust your managers, which is why you went to work for a competitor. Here you told me, 'trust wasn't a problem'. Later you rejoined your former employer. What's your view now about trust?

- *I felt the company wasn't fair to me – and to some of my colleagues, as I found out from talking with them. I decided to leave to improve my career. I came back here because my father became ill and I needed to be near my family. I was very happy and a bit surprised that they did take me back*

again. And I'm happy about it, even though many management problems – the trust problems I spoke about before – haven't changed. Most of the same senior people are there. But I now feel more confident about dealing with them and, having worked for one of the competitors for a few years, I can see things differently now. Trust is a problem everywhere. You just try to get on with the job and with the people you work with.

RQ: In our discussion about the psychological contract you mentioned your perception of not being treated fairly. Do you think this comes from your perception as a woman?

- *I guess my experience in the States means that I am less tolerant of the male dominant way of many senior Turkish managers. Also Turkish women managers discriminate, I think maybe when they're jealous of another women's age and education.*

RQ: Do you mean your age and your education?

- *Yes. I think some older women are jealous of my age and my independent attitude and the fact that my family could live in the States when I went to school.*

Three-way conversation

T1 invited **T4** to participate in her conversation. **T4** is 27 years old, female, and working in a public sector organisation. Through a family friend - who had been **T4**'s mentor during induction into her current organisation – **T1** had heard about **T4**'s interest in participating in this research. After completing Q1 and the semi-structured interview **T4** accepted **T1**'s invitation to join her conversation. As an opening gambit, **T1** summarised some of her response to interview questions about trust in the psychological contract:

- *Professional people expect to understand why senior managers make decisions that affect them – this builds trust. The 'deal' must be understood to mean that those who work hard get the best rewards. I don't trust some managers to recognise that, and particularly those who try to get close to the boss and his family. You know that I once quit my current company and went to work for a competitor in (another city). I was better paid, and for a while everything was fine. As it says in the psychological contract, that was the deal. That was trust.*

T4 responded:

- *Well, as 'X' (name of mentor) has probably told you, I only worked for this organisation. They recruited me straight from university. The big change*

for me was moving to a new city. They helped me settle here and I can't imagine why I would quit this job. The pay is not so good. But we have a strong group of colleagues and the work we do is very important for the future of our country.

T4 asked **T1** why she had returned to her original employer.

- *Honestly I missed my old workplace and most of all I missed my former colleagues. We had been like a family – gone through induction and training together. For private family reasons I had to move back to this area and so asked if I could rejoin my former employer. They took me back, which surprised me. My old and now new team colleagues and I are like a family together, but despite and not because of the organisation and some of its senior managers.*

RQ: And how far do you both think that this family feeling is to do with your own approach to your work? Or is something especially Turkish?

- **T1:** *Good feeling is very important among Turkish people. Family is very important. Generally I think we are very emotional in how we work together. This might be what you call trust.*
- **T4:** *I agree. The feeling of family is important. I know that my work colleagues – well, most of them – would help me if I had trouble with work and even if I had a family problem they knew about and could help me with.*

RQ: To what extent do you think men and women have different expectations about this 'family feeling' at work?

- **T1:** *It's different, I think. And especially if the man has his own family to worry about. His job is to do the best for them. Many Turkish men still have problems treating women as equal, even at work. Some men are OK, but I still think work relationships between women can be closer than relationships between men, especially married men.*
- **T4:** *For me it's different because most of my colleagues are women – 90%, I would say. The bosses tend to be men, and I know some of my colleagues think that it's better to have a male boss than a female one – something to do with jealousy, I think. I don't mind, as long as people are treated fairly.*

RQ: You might have heard about some Turkish researchers from Sabançi (university) discovered that perceptions of 'integrity' and 'benevolence' are important factors in how Turkish people appear to trust other people at work. What's your view?

Echoing the Tan et al (2007) study alluded to in the **RQ**, both respondents checked in English and in Turkish how each concept might be translated:

- **T4:** *Integrity for me is knowing that someone is honest with me and won't say or do anything to harm me.*
- **T1:** *But isn't that like benevolence – believing that someone won't harm you?*
- **T4:** *Maybe benevolence is more about knowing that someone won't harm you now while integrity is more about believing that they wouldn't do such a thing in future.*
- **T1:** *I think that's right. I hadn't thought about it like that before. Integrity is like a personal characteristic. Something we would expect a leader to have, looking forward and caring for people. Benevolence is like a warm smile: you feel safe with that person.*

RQ: The researchers I mentioned were comparing whether Turkish people tend to trust other people differently than people from other countries. What's your view or experience? Is it easier for you to trust a Turkish person than, say, a British person?

- **T1:** *No, I don't think we can say that. Each person is different; each person makes their own mind.*
- **T4:** *I think so, too, but really it depends on the situation. I would find it difficult to trust someone who, I think, doesn't show me respect as a Turkish person and as a Turkish woman.*

8.5 Conversations with 'the Chinese'

At the time of the first conversation **HK7**, a Hong Kong Chinese male and an original member of the HKFG, was thirty-nine years old. While completing his EMBA **HK7** had set up as a consultant entrepreneur in supply-chain systems design. As a 'one-man company' he spoke about trust in relation to expanding his business into Mainland China.

- *I've stopped looking in Shenzhen [adjacent to Hong Kong] for business partners. Shanghai is where the best potential is, but it's difficult to trust people there. More than once I've agreed a deal with someone, they've not paid me, and when I went [to Shanghai] to find them, they had moved away, disappeared. Now I try only to do business with people in Beijing. Closer to the government means closer to the power of law. People in Beijing are more careful before they try to cheat you.*

Echoing Child and Moellering (2003) **HK7** appears to suggest that relying on shared perceptions of national or ethnic identity is not a sufficient basis for trust and securing a deal with other Chinese business partners: ‘contextual confidence’ should frame interpersonal or ‘active’ trust development in China as in Europe (cf. Luhmann, 1988). Consequently, factors beyond culture or ethnic identity are relevant; notably, and by **HK7**’s own admission, the confluence of political, economic, socio-cultural, technological, environmental and legal (i.e. ‘PESTEL’) macro factors that can be inferred to give context to any cross-border risk calculation and / or investment decision (cf. Jackson, 2007a). Perceptions of distance (physical, ethical and institutional) appear to influence **HK7**’s trusting attitudes and behaviour: his ‘faith in humanity’ as defined within his business sector in China (cf. McKnight & Chervany, 2006). This insight might be explained by reference to the political geography of China: ‘people in Beijing’ being perceived as ‘more trustworthy’ from **HK7**’s self-interested perspective. As communications and business technologies advance the question remains open as to how far physical geography accounts for fundamental differences in culture-specific perception.

When the conversations began **C2** was fifty-seven and held both Chinese (PRC) and US American nationality. At the time she was a senior manager in the Tokyo office of a global NGO undergoing restructuring as part of a cost-cutting exercise. The corporate language is English, and **C2** explained how many of her female Japanese colleagues looked to her for advice during the change ‘because I am a woman’.

RQ: But also because you are in their eyes a *gaijin*, which might mean these women feel safer confiding in you?

- *Possibly. I worked in the Washington HQ and so they probably believe I am well connected in the organisation. But I believe that they trust me more because I am a woman and because I’m older than most of them.*

RQ: They respect you because of your age?

- *I think because of what they know of my experience.*

C2 went on to explain how she had fled as a young woman to the United States from the so-called 'Cultural Revolution' in China. After studying economics and marrying a Chinese American she had joined this NGO and was now responsible for coordinating between the Tokyo and Beijing operations.

RQ: Do you find it easier to gain the trust of business partners in Beijing today because you are Chinese and speak Mandarin?

- *It is because I know my job. Of course, the fact that I am clearly Chinese makes a difference, not always positive.*

RQ: You know that some western researchers maintain that members of Chinese cultures tend to be highly 'collectivistic' and tend to exclude outsiders. In your view and experience, is this how trust might work?

- *Collectivist? More likely 'collectivised'! This happened to my family during the Cultural Revolution. This is one of the remarkable things happening in China today. In business and in lifestyle choices there is a liberation of individual thinking; at the same time there is still this political conformity. From a western point of view this might appear to be a contradiction. But this is to overlook the contradictions in the western view.*

Respondent **C3** is in his seventies and a professor of social anthropology in a Southern Chinese university. He claims to have been 'exiled' there during the 1970s from Beijing, where his children and their families still live. He had participated in the preliminary studies and advised in the design of Q1. One of his first comments was in response to the Hofstede (1984) definition of 'culture' as 'software of the mind': 'If culture is the software, who or what designed the hardware?' In the spirit of triangulation an alternative perspective on 'culture' was explored. To illustrate, Trompenaars (2003) posits a hypothetical dilemma whereby individuals who, as passengers in a car driven by a close friend, witness a hit-and-run accident involving this friend and an unknown pedestrian. The dilemma emerges as the passenger mulls over whether the pedestrian died and whether they should report their friend to the local police. After eliciting responses across an international sample of adults Trompenaars maps out a series of cross-cultural comparisons much in the style of the Hofstede (1980) model.

C3 reflected:

- *There was a time, I think, when if such a thing happened in China the culprit would be found out. Word would go around and eventually it would come back to him. It might take generations, but it would eventually come back to him and his family. Now I'm not so sure. If you look at new cities like Shenzhen where these young people come to from all over China, far way from their families, I think this might not happen now. The driver might remain anonymous. This is how Chinese cities have changed Chinese people: they have become more anonymous, like in western cities.*

In response to **C3**'s conclusion, I sent him the following quote:

- *Trustworthiness implies adherence and loyalty to moral principles, to ritual and social rules or propriety, and to one's superiors in hierarchical relationships (Yang et al, 2008:35)*

C3 identified this view as building on the philosophical and moral traditions ascribed to Confucius.

RQ: Are these principles still valid among Chinese people today?

- *Yes they are. However, in cities such as Shenzhen there is a generation of young people who maintain hierarchical relationships in their immediate social and business circles, looking over their shoulders to the power of the central and local governments and other institutions that have the power to intervene in the way they want to live and do business. These people have moved away from the influence of stable family relationships.*

RQ: Is this development unique to the Chinese?

- *Based on my experience of working and living in the US, no.*

After this response, I sent **C3** a follow up quote from Chen and Lee (2008):

- *Although honesty is a central value in Chinese philosophy as shown in earlier chapters on Confucius and Xunzi, it is not unique to the Chinese. Honesty and trustworthiness are central values in Western or perhaps any other civilization (Zhang et al, 2008:264).*

The response from **C3** this time confirmed that 'the Chinese' were not special or unique in this case. However, he also suggested that common Chinese interpretations of 'virtues' such as 'honesty' influence business and management behaviour in ways little understood – or predicted - in western sociological tradition (cf. Weber 1951, 1984). He recognised how the type of 'critical incident' illustrated in the Trompenaars (2003) survey is designed precisely to distinguish between cultures by generalising from individual responses. What if a focus

group of Shenzhen Chinese were asked to respond to the Trompenaars dilemma? According to **C3** the focus on individuals is valid because of the pace of urbanisation in cities such as Shenzhen, at that time China's fastest growing city. The assumption is that radical and rapid changes across and within each individual's living and working spaces can cause individuals to feel increasingly rootless: their sense of contextual confidence becomes eroded (cf. Chan, 2005). Depending on the nature and starting point for change - and thus for any shift in individual perception, experience, and anchoring of culture-specific values - the routine intimacy of, for example, a clearly defined 'village' becomes lost when the village becomes experienced as a 'village within a city' (cf. Liu, 2010). As a consequence, the embedded relations of trust, distrust and social capital that prior reference to 'village' might imply become transformed, in China as elsewhere in the world, resulting in a 'heightened sense of the self defined by individualism' (Tam et al, 2010:xiii).

8.6 Age

Much social research focuses on exploring the relative significance of and interaction between demographic variables such as age, gender and ethnicity (cf. O'Brien, 1993). The discussion now turns towards exploring meanings attributed to trust and related concepts while considering such variables.

Age

Age is established as a significant variable in social and psychological research. Indeed, psychologists commonly divide their attention between developmental psychology focussing on young people, while adults attract different forms of analysis (Erikson, 1968). The assumption here is that 'adults' (however socio-culturally defined) have passed a threshold in their social, psychological, and biological development that separates them from the formative socialisation experiences of childhood (Giddens, 2006). The research assumptions presented in chapter six emphasised some of the durable aspects of human trusting behaviour learned during childhood: e.g. perceptions of ubiquitous uncertainty.

The influence of age on how employees choose to trust can be understood in both social and psychological terms (cf. Allport, 1935; Hogg & Vaughn, 2002). As illustrated in discussion of the trust-control dilemma in chapter three, age interpreted as length or quality of work experience is likely to influence how individual employees respond to HRM interventions. Correspondingly, age is relevant as a variable in data generation and analysis: e.g. when designed into the sampling and selecting processes and age interpreted as length of working experience or tenure is assumed to help define international employees at mid-career stage of their professional development.

Career

In the conversations all respondents appear define their 'career' as a series of remembered HRM interventions and individual choices, several of which such as marriage and relocation are not necessarily tied to any one employment (cf. Duggan & Jurgens, 2006). Here, age as experience is interpreted retrospectively. Prompted by **RQs** each respondent might also define a career as a series of imagined cognitive and affective events in which trust might appear as a factor shaping the career decisions they might make in future (cf. Reardon et al, 2005). Here, current age supports a future-oriented perspective. This shift or transfer of perspectives is evident in **J4's** concern for his son. According to Sato (2007b) today's university graduates in Japan perceive quite different 'images' of career than those previously experienced - and inherited - as routine by their parents. The mix of trust and loyalty that appeared to represent a social good among previous generations of male, management-track employees such as **J4** appears now increasingly uncertain. The vulnerability he now feels became manifest in his discovery of the 'missing principles' in the company logo: **J4's** image of career as captured tangibly on his business card (*o-meishi*) appears frozen in past perception. As common in many cross-generational (and hence cross-cultural?) comparisons of 'where' people currently 'are' **J4** perceives a contrast between his own age-defined experiences and his son's current perception of early-stage career development in Japan. According to Albert (1990) 'creativity, identity, and career choice come together in the late teens or early twenties for most people'

(1990:13). This is the general type of flexibility and adaptability commonly associated with 'new hire' perceptions of the employment relationship (Rousseau, 1990) or with so-called 'talented' employees for whom each employment relationship might be perceived as only one in several shaping an individual career trajectory (cf. Cappelli, 2008). This division in reported 'career choice' appears to divide generations or *ages* of employees.

8.7 Gender

In social and anthropological research gender is one of the few independent variables assumed to explain patterns of diversity in social attitudes (Ritzer, 2007). Men and women are assumed to experience socialisation from differing biological and psychological starting points (Rapport & Overing, 2000) – an assumption supported by the Q1 data in chapter five. Indeed, some feminist trust researchers claim that women learn to trust differently than men (Baier, 1983). In contexts for HRM gender might be linked to questions about 'diversity' and to conceptualisations of 'power', interpreted as enforceable access to resources such as recognition, promotion and other rewards for performance (Handy, 1993). At this stage it is relevant to highlight how the 'global mindset' appears neutral in respect of gender (cf. Mansour et al 2007; Steers et al, 2010) - a research perspective challenged below.

In sociological terms the testimony of the women in this chapter suggests that gender remains a significant factor in explaining how and why people attribute differing meanings to trust. **C2** links gender and age as factors in this process, where age is equated to experience and as an indicator of a having achieved an advanced career stage. Age as experience and the potential for more developed wisdom is captured in Confucian philosophy, as are social role distributions according to gender (Gardner, 2003). Echoing Tam et al (2010), growing up as a woman subject to Confucian tradition is akin to learning a 'sex role' as (for example) a potential mother with obligations rather than a *gender* role as (for example) an employee with individualised career prospects. From his elevated status as an eminent (male) professor **C3** suggests that a physical relocation combined with a social-cultural 'disruption' (cf. Fukuyama, 2000) has impacted

on social, legal and economic interpretations of trustworthiness among emerging urban generations of Chinese. Again, age and gender combine; for the shift or disorientation in individual values attributed to experiences rapid urbanisation and prospects of enhanced social mobility influences both male and female employees, and particularly international employees who perceive a willingness to move or migrate as a fundamental feature of the 'international mindset' described by Sparrow et al (2004) and as exemplified by **J3**, **J5**, **T1** and **C2**.

In contrast **HK7**'s cross-cultural business concerns appear to underplay gender, perhaps as a result of the one child policy in Mainland China resulting in a mixed male and female cadre of entrepreneurs to be encountered there in contrast to in more traditional Hong Kong society (cf. Lo et al, 2003; Chan, 2005). As demonstrated in the cross-cultural communicative competence and linguistic adaptability and flexibility expressed by **T1** and **T4**, a question arises as to whether women employees and managers, having established a largely self-generated career trajectory, should be considered generally more effectively adaptive to shifting career opportunities than their male counterparts (cf. Yuasa, 2009; Debroux, 2010a). Echoing Steers et al (2010:37), there is an open question as to whether women might appear more adept at expressing 'multicultural competence'.

Language and gender

Language represents a distinguishing artefact influencing people's experience of cultures and sub-cultures (cf. Geertz, 2000; Lewis, 1996). Linking language use to culture-specific attitudes and behaviours appears to support the Hofstede (1980) interpretation of 'culture' as something 'programmed', 'learned' and 'transmitted' from generation to generation (cf. Mead, 2005). In respect of gender it appears appropriate to consider the biological forces that predate the sociological influences shaping human identity: i.e. social, psychological and biological, each of which will combine to shape individual perceptions, experiences and expectations of, for example, other people's relative trustworthiness (cf. Kurihara, 2006). However, such attributable factors need

not be understood – or correlated statically or exclusively in respect of the individual. To illustrate, Kurihara (2006:27), borrowing from Pierre Bourdieu and his concept of *habitus*, refers to ‘gendered spaces’ that women and men together and in opposition create interactively and reciprocally, as when she drifts through the open plan office reflecting on her own identity as she infers the perceptions of others.

In this respect the IM and CCM literature build on rather skewed foundations. For example, Hofstede (1980, 2001) appears to have difficulty accommodating what might be termed modern or (here) ‘international’ gender-specific perspectives. He continues to single out ‘masculine’ cultures where ‘men are supposed to be assertive, ambitious and tough’ and ‘women are supposed to be tender and to take care of relationships’ (Hofstede, 1991:96). In the Hofstede rankings describing his ‘masculinity’ (MAS) index, Japan routinely figures as the most masculine of societies with a score (95) that is nineteen times higher than that given to Sweden (Hofstede, 1991:84). Emphasising culture-specific values rather than sociological gender Hofstede (1991:89) explains how ‘both men and women hold tougher values in masculine countries and more tender values in feminine ones’. However, and without defining precisely what ‘tough’ and ‘tender’ might mean conceptually or in practice, Hofstede also maintains that in masculine countries the MAS scores for men can be up to fifty per cent higher than for women in the same country (1991:83). On this premise and within the limits of his chosen research sample, Hofstede (1991:81) claims that ‘female managers are virtually non-existent in Japan’. By this argument, **J1** and **J3** represent a ‘virtually non-existent’ segment of Japanese society.

The ‘I’ problem revisited

In contexts for Japanese HRM female employees appear systematically to have been disadvantaged by socially and culturally embedded linkages between gender and power (cf. Ogasawa, 1998; Yuasa, 2009). Perceptions, experiences and expectations of discrimination are likely, over time, to become manifest in language, prompting socio- and psycholinguists to explore a ‘gender gap’ in how men and women tend to interact socially. For example, English language

research indicates that across language-specific groups women generally ask more questions than men, are more active as listeners, and generally 'make greater use of the pronouns *you* and *we*' (Crystal, 1987:21). In Japanese gender is formalised in pronoun references to 'I' (*watashi*). More traditionally, women were expected to use a reduced *atashi* form. Meanwhile, an alternative and more assertive expression (*boku*) remained - until recently - the preserve of men. Both **J3** and **J5** routinely use the *watashi* form; **J4** and his *doki* use both *watashi* and *boku*, while **J5** speaks of a younger sister who routinely uses the *boku* form with her male and female *doki*. Invoking **C3**'s comments and the Liu (2010) analysis of Shenzhen it should be noted that the majority of the respondents cited in this study are by choice 'urbanites', living and working in some of the world's largest and most developed cities - as would be expected of international employees and expatriates came to initial salience as MNCs set up subsidiaries to connect with global transportation and communication networks (cf. Ohmae, 2001). Only **G1** admits to being from a rural (North German) background. Given that these major urban regions tend to be the preferred locations for international employers there is an opportunity here to research whether parallel expressions of the aforementioned 'I' (self) concept apply in cases of gender discrimination in Japan, China, and elsewhere in contexts for IHRM. As highlighted in chapter five, insights of such enquiries might cast some doubt on the validity of generalisations linked to gender based on data generated by 'I tend to'-style cross-sectional surveys such as Q1.

The data generalisability problem

For one of the primary objectives of social research is to support a process of generalisation to populations more broadly defined than the sample selected for one or other research study (cf. Newell, 1993; Phillips & Pugh, 2006). However, there appears little trust research currently linking gender, 'I' and culture - another reason to look within academic disciplines not immediately associated with IM, CCM and IHRM. There appears to be little scholarly consensus on how these generalisations should proceed. It might be as well to accept (for now) Annette Baier's view that women generally trust *differently* (i.e. as opposed to

'more' or 'less') than men – a claim that could find support in the testimonies of **T1**, **T4** and **C3** in this chapter. However, this attempt at generalisation is hampered by the insight that all the female respondents cited here are probably 'untypical' for their respective societies. Using Hofstede's terminology, 'national cultures' again appear to offer a less than fully appropriate starting point towards understanding a female perspective on employment and individual career development (cf. Khilji, 2003) and, by extension, towards identifying an international employee perspective on trust.

The Japan study revisited

Both **J3** and **J5** appear to be representative of the 'non-typical' convenience sample that emerged out of the Japan study outlined in chapter five. Applying common discourse analysis techniques to the validated text of their conversations appears to highlight a series of similarities and differences in their attitudes towards trust in contexts for employment and individual career development. In conceptual terms these similarities and differences might equate to their differing 'ways of viewing the world' (Steers et al, 2010:37); their diversely drawn 'map of the world' (cf. Schneider & Barsoux, 2003; Boyes, 2006). To illustrate, one anchoring phrase for **J5** appears to be: *I trusted my line-manager..... I liked the way he worked and his approach to teamwork*. She later described him as a 'kind man' with 'a good heart' – an emphasis on 'tenderness' apparently little captured by the Hofstede profile of 'masculine' Japanese culture. As suggested in relation to **J1**, the 'heart' informs Japanese interpretations of 'loyalty' (*chuu-sei*) connecting simultaneously with ostensibly more 'masculine' *samurai* traditions associated with *bushido* (cf. Jackson & Tomioka, 2004). Consequently, the values associated with loyalty in Japan appear to transcend gender stereotyping and thus support the Hofstede culture-specific analysis of Japanese national culture, although his own analysis appears to exclude the inclusion of women employees. Why is this? For by his (1991) calculation Japanese women should be up to six times 'more masculine' than their Swedish counterparts.

In terms of individualised perception and attribution **J5** adjudges her new and once former (male) boss to be a competent scientist and successful entrepreneur, 'clever' in the way he attracted and secured capital for his new venture. Where (in her own perception) merited, she readily attributes such qualities to non-Japanese employers and business partners. Applying the terminology of the ABI (*Figure 2*) **J5** appears to perceive her boss as *competent* and attribute *integrity*. By selecting her to represent the venture in Europe, the boss appears to be reciprocating **J5**'s perception. A pervasive risk is whether a subsequent downturn in business fortune might provoke a shift in perception and, by extension, by her expression of contextual confidence. As **J5** herself suggests: *When everyone is busy and work is going OK, I don't think about trust.* Would she have reflected on the routine trustworthiness of her work-colleagues if not explicitly prompted to do so by a researcher?

Over the course of the conversations the business venture in question did experience a dramatic downturn and **J5** did reassess her perception of her former boss's integrity. The above citations appear to suggest one pattern expressing **J5**'s general expectation or state of mind, notably in relation to perceptions of *both* personal *and* professional 'integrity' in line-managers – in Japanese work cultures, boundaries between personal and professional domains are assumed to be 'diffuse' (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998). When the conversation focussed more explicitly on questions of perceived 'competence', skills-based phrases such as 'approach to problem solving' and 'team working' became more frequent. This suggests a similarity of attitude and perception with (male) **J4**: an emphasis of perception on people *doing* as opposed to *being / appearing*. Relevant beyond gender, nationality might be the professional sub-cultures that bind scientists and engineers: i.e. more relevant here than reference to some notion of national cultural identity. To be fair, Hofstede (1991:86) allows for this possibility. Consequently, a starting point for future cross-cultural research might be to test for variables of 'professional culture' with a hypothetical focus on 'professional trust' (cf. Bunderson, 2001; Frowe, 2005) rather than assume the relevance of some ascribed national cultural identity.

Indeed, J5's apparent fusion of personal and professional perceptions of another manager's trustworthiness might be more relevantly explained in reference to more general perceptions of uncertainty and risk. In 'real world' research / strategic business terms risk must be a factor given the relative newness and small size of J5's venture together with its operational - and vulnerable - dependency on third-party finance. Size, age and resource base are key variables when comparing organisations and the psychological contracts negotiated within them (Argyris, 1960; Mullins, 2005). Recalling *Figure 1*, interpreting the outer box of the model as 'the organisation' is thus useful in giving context to the employment relationship simultaneously negotiated within its boundary: as the coded interview data from chapter seven suggest, respondents readily invoke ORG when reflecting on trust in the psychological contract. This insight appears to accord with J5's view that *in a smaller company, more important is the work you do* and with J3's comment that *big companies in strong markets are still very male-dominated with old-fashioned thinking* before going on to describe her lone encounter as a female manager among 120 male HR managers at one 'old-fashioned' *kaisha*.

Overall, there appears to be a case for re-examining the evidence supported by gender-oriented hypotheses of trust that simultaneously foreground national culture – a prospect sketched out in chapter nine. For now it is appropriate to question the validity of expecting international employees to draw predominantly on trusting attitudes and behaviours formed during their early-years experience of socialisation: adult perceptions, calculations and experiences of professional risk and development might well override these – in response to research surveys about trust, at least. Echoing Khilji (2003), the 'map of the world' lending context to how international employees attribute meaning to trust might be oriented more to their future than to their past (cf. Boyes, 2006).

8.8 Nationality

As suggested by Warner (2003), national cultural identity is a construct rooted in each individual's experience of - and education into - the past. Consequently,

one approach towards giving broader context to questions about an individual's (by self) assumed or (by others) ascribed national cultural identity is to emphasise culture as only *one* factor in a connected and confluent series of factors that might serve to explain and predict why people behave as they do, and particularly in describing contexts for international business and cross-cultural communication (cf. Child & Möllering, 2003; Jackson, 2007a). The so-called PESTEL (or PESTLE) framework alluded to in response to **HK7**'s testimony facilitates such a macro-analysis. Indeed, connecting with global and national demographic trends such as the rise in migration across Mainland China, another 'PEDTEL' version is gaining ground among scholars, where 'D' represents the shifting demographic factors highlighted in chapter four (cf. Steers et al, 2010).

To illustrate, **HK7** appears to be applying PESTEL-type analysis to describe his experience that relying on shared perceptions of national or ethnic identity is not sufficient to trust and secure a 'deal' with other Chinese business partners. Factors beyond culture or ethnic identity are relevant: notably, political, economic, technological and legal factors. Perceptions of distance (physical and ethical) appear to influence his attitudes and behaviour, an insight that might be explained by reference to the political geography of China together with the intangible and emergent (as opposed to established) reach of political *guanxi* (cf. Chen & Lee, 2008). As communications and business technologies advance, the question remains open as to how far physical geography or 'relationship to nature' still accounts for fundamental differences in people's culture-specific perception (cf. Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998).

With force born of bitter family experience **C2** appears to dismiss the Hofstede (1980, 2001) notion that Chinese employees share and express more 'collectivistic' values and behaviours than their US American counterparts. Here, **C2**'s international experience of gender, age status and individual career trajectory might supersede to an overwhelming degree her ascribed national cultural identity. As Søndergaard (1994) points out, even Hofstede now recognizes the contemporary fragility of his original 'individualism' concept.

Nonetheless, the notion of 'collectivistic' Chinese is supported in the Trompenaars (2003) data, an analysis that would appear to connect with the McKnight and Chervany (2006) 'trust as social rumour' concept. Their suggestion that this concept 'needs further research' appears to be supported by **C3**'s anecdotal analysis in respect of an emerging generation of socially mobile Chinese. Indeed, the **C3** conversation serves to highlight the grey area between political, social-cultural and legal factors in the PESTEL / PEDTEL analysis: an area that might be termed business ethics (cf. Kline, 2005). The **C3** conversation also suggests a local or regional rather than a national cultural distinction between social rumours and trust in low-tech 'village' settings and in high-tech urbanised settings (cf. Liu, 2010). Through advances in communications technology such as the rapidly expanding distribution of internet and mobile phone connectivity, the potential of trusting attitudes and behaviours to become influenced by processes of 'social rumour' and (as on-line marketers might have it) contrived demonstrations of 'social proof' or even assumed 'truth' have redefined the terrain of cross-cultural trust and HRM / IHRM research (cf. Lee-Kelley, 2006).

Self-trust

Against this background **J3**'s invocation of 'self-trust' is intriguing. Here as during the preliminary studies **J3** stands out as a resourceful individual. In the extracts cited here, *self-trust* appears to stand as her anchoring phrase and an expression of what appears to guide her decisions to quit or stay with both Japanese and international employers. Although her age, gender and nationality remain factors influencing such decisions, by her own admission the concept of self-trust appears to express an individual anchoring that defies narrow containment with reference to either of these three variables. Her mindset appears more international or global than 'Japanese'.

In contrast, **J4**'s apparent failure to perceive through auditory and visual channels that some key symbolic detail of the established 'deal' with his life-long employer had been compromised clearly promoted deep reflection on his part.

Indeed, at psychological levels too deep to be explored here, **J4** may have chosen subconsciously to 'delete' this particular compromise from his surface memory (cf. Bandler & Grinder, 1984). After a dramatic and enforced shock revelation, his perception of a tangible aspect of his familiar professional identity (*o-meishi*) became rendered suddenly unfamiliar.

Trust remains a common reference point in studies of how organisational change might be managed: trust emerges as a feature explaining how employees appear to respond to the prospect of interventions signalling radical changes to established patterns and structures of work (cf. Lewin, 1951; Senior, 2002). Both **G1** and **J4** are professional enough to understand how business and economic pressures generate a perceived need to change how they and their colleagues work. Nonetheless, employee perceptions and attributions of, for example, ABI factors appear heightened during periods of forced change. Their responses suggest an ongoing sense of vulnerability to change as communicated through the agency of their employer / preferred trustee. Furthermore, the key points of reference in their particular trustor-trustee relationships appear to be retrospective; or, invoking the terminology of the psychological contract (*Figure 1*), focussing on 'cause' rather than forward-looking 'consequence' factors. As values appear to shift in their respective fields of employment and career development older employees might increasingly focus their perceptions and at the 'consequence' end of the contract, linking advanced age to relevant employment experience to represent a calculation of their own diminishing market value (Fay, 2010b). As **J4** believes of himself: *I'm an engineer, not a business consultant.*

Conversely, the women cited in this chapter might believe they have less to lose – having been discriminated against previously – and thus *per force* be more concentrated on the forward-looking consequences end of negotiations: what is this organisation going to do for *me*? If this line of inference has any validity then the argument for developing more of a diversity agenda into researching trust and the psychological contract becomes reinforced (Conway & Briner, 2007). In this sense, individualised analyses of gender combined with explorations designed to elicit individual perceptions of risk and opportunity might be more

relevant, valid and reliable than generalised explanatory references to assumed or ascribed national cultural identity. In this sense, attempting to elicit and explore an *international* employee perspective on trust serves to shift focus away from nationality and more towards the individual, just as invoking 'international' as opposed to 'national' or 'domestic' employment laws might at first sight appear to obfuscate the issue: there is no 'international' law of employment, only guidelines issued by pan-national institutions such as the ILO. However, with a little more reflection we might realise that, within the fuzziness of the 'international' concept, the main concern is a universally human one rather one relevant to citizens allocated to one or other national political entity. A similar effect appears to be achieved by J1's invocation of 'self-trust': just another type of trust? Or an invocation that shifts attention from 'trust' as a complex and elusive concept back to the 'self': i.e. the source of trust and the measure against which to assess its relevance and meaning.

Overall, the re-conceptualisation of 'trust' as 'self-trust' represents one of the more striking findings to emerge out of these conversations. It opens pathways to further exploration. For now, it can be observed how this concept connects with a wisdom expressed by Goethe, cited at the top of this chapter: 'the sooner you trust yourself, the sooner you know how to live'.

8.9 Summary

In contexts specific to HRM practice Torrington et al (2009:723) posit that:

- *Perceptions of power inequality undermine trust, inhibit dialogue, and decrease the likelihood of a constructive outcome*

The conversations cited and discussed in this chapter represent an attempt to achieve some degree of 'satisfaction and well being' shared by the researcher and the research respondents. Adopting an open-ended conversational approach informed by principles of *verstehend* ethnography appears to have addressed the perceptions of 'power inequality' that might 'inhibit dialogue' and 'undermine' respondent perceptions of research and researcher trustworthiness. Overall, the patterns of data explored in this chapter serve towards achieving and perhaps

even surpassing the objective of exploration stated in chapter one: an illustration here might be the emergence to prominence of the *self-trust* concept. The extent to which this claim might withstand critical scrutiny is examined in chapter nine.

Chapter 9: Research contributions and limitations: prospects for future research

Everything is a succession of appearances whose source is the accumulation of causes and conditions

Teachings of the Buddha (1960:88)

9.0 Introduction

In chapter one the research objective chosen to inform the design and guide the development of this study was posited as:

- *To explore meanings attributed to trust when interpreting and negotiating the psychological contract in contexts relevant to IHRM.*

The purpose of the discussion in this concluding chapter is to examine the extent to which this research objective has been achieved. Particular attention is given to contributions that this study offers to the combined fields of trust and psychological contract research. Having emphasised the development of an international employee perspective, consideration is also given to contributions made to current and future approaches in IHRM research and practice. For balance, this concluding discussion identifies the many limitations evident in this study, several of which have been highlighted in previous chapters as part of an ongoing process of critical reflection. Looking ahead, weaknesses in design and execution are recast in terms of their potential value towards suggesting pathways for future research.

9.1 Characteristics of good research

Phillips and Pugh (2006) set out an authoritative view on the 'characteristics' of 'good research' in contexts relevant to doctoral examinations. Firstly, they insist that research should be 'based on an open system of thought' (2006:48). In practical terms this invites researchers to avoid posing as 'one who knows the right answers'. Instead, 'good' researchers appear to be 'struggling to find out what the right questions might be' (Phillips & Pugh, 2006:48) – hence the

exploratory approach taken in this current study. This emphasis on open-minded enquiry supports the second of their stated characteristics: to 'examine data critically' (2006:49). Here, researchers should 'go to great trouble to get systematic, valid and reliable data because their aim is to understand and interpret' (Phillips & Pugh, 2006:49) – hence the systematic attention given in this study towards eliciting meanings attributable to trust and attempting to interpret these according to context and perspective. The emphasis Phillips and Pugh give to understanding and interpreting is contrasted against attempts to promote 'facts' or to accept other researchers' findings uncritically – hence the 'critical approach' heralded in chapter one towards established and primarily western-oriented conceptualisations of trust and of the psychological contract. The general orientation developed in this study has been towards challenging western conceptualisations of trust in the psychological contract by eliciting and exploring diverse and international employee perspectives on these.

The third characteristic of good research emerges when researchers use their understanding and interpretation of data to 'generalize and specify the limits on their generalizations' (Phillips & Pugh 2006:49). The extent to which this current study can claim to have matched this and the other two characteristics of 'good' research is examined here.

9.2 Working towards an open system of thought

A fundamental problem during the planning and execution of this study has been the temptation towards bias. Research bias – like uncertainty – is unavoidable: adopting a particular perspective entails developing a particular bias on any phenomenon or idea (Robson, 2002). The key research issue here is to be aware of bias and how it might be corrected or compensated for. To illustrate, explicit and recurrent reference to 'trust' has pervaded social, political and economic discourse since this study began. Global news media continue to talk of politicians needing to 'regain public trust' and for senior members of banks and other once-revered institutions to 'regain the trust' or key stakeholders: 'confidence' in and of 'the markets' has fluctuated time and again: the global

demand for trust – like gold on commodity markets – appears at ‘an all time high’. At several points in this study claims have been made about the fusion – and potential confusion – between product and process of trust research. This overlap has been expressed in the terms of discourse analysis, as appropriate in contexts for international and cross-cultural management research and practice (cf. Tan et al, 2007). Overall, this approach has highlighted dual interpretations of trust as, for example, a perceived commodity or state of mind - expressed in phrases such as ‘to *have* trust in’ - and trust as process word or verb as in ‘to trust’ or ‘be trusting of’. In discourse terms the voluntary choice of phrase is indicative of a trustor / trustee attitude or state of mind (cf. Fromm, 1998).

Echoing Yamagishi (2005) the general researcher-driven focus in this study has been on eliciting and exploring people’s ‘trusting attitudes and behaviours’ in contexts for international employment; notably, in respect of which employers and their agents international employees perceive as more or less trustworthy, and how, when, for how long, and why. Emphasis has been given to trust as a social phenomenon (cf. Lane, 1998; Sztompka, 1999; Möllering, 2006a). Interpreting trust as an observable and thereby measurable ‘phenomenon’ encourages social researchers to focus on how and when human trusting attitudes and behaviours appear to become manifest, as when employees choose to express ‘commitment’ or ‘loyalty’ by opting to stay with rather than quit their current organisation or employer; as when investors choose to put their money – and faith – in gold.

The emphasis generally and specifically in this study has been on interpreting trust as a *process* (i.e. *trusting*) rather than on trust as a *commodity*. This represents more than a semantic exercise, for there are deep philosophical, social and psychological dimensions to such wordplay (cf. Chomsky, 1965; Fromm, 1976; Wittgenstein, 1998). As illustrated in chapter four and in the preliminary and primary studies since, the precise choice of terminology - and thereby style of communication - has implications across contexts for IM, IHRM and CCM research and practice (cf. Schneider & Barsoux, 2003; Mead & Andrews, 2009; Steers et al, 2010).

One consequence of this conceptual and empirical exploration process has been to challenge established boundaries of the psychological contract as a scholarly HRM construct, noted as an example of a markedly *western* scholarly discourse (cf. Western, 2008). A systematic attempt has been made with this study to explore cross-cultural dimensions of trust. This has been mirrored in the quotes selected to open each chapter. These demonstrate an attempt to develop a diverse and multi-perspective understanding of trust, guided for practical purposes by the stated intent to explore and develop 'an international employee perspective'. To illustrate, the cross-cultural nature of this exploration has identified a variety of attributions and perceptions that might be read from the Chinese / Japanese character 信 and contrasted these with examples from English and other European languages and cultures. One outcome has been to challenge some of the overt 'either / or' bi-polar analyses embedded in much western management research of trust. The humanistic tenor of this challenge has highlighted the potential of researching towards a deeper and more diverse understanding of the *self-trust* concept in both eastern and western cultures for HRM. For where there is duality of possible interpretation or emphasis (cf. Möllering, 2005) there is a tension for confusion and ambiguity, and thus a rich terrain for the exploratory 'understanding and interpreting' approach encouraged by Phillips and Pugh (2006) in their recommendation to work towards an open system of thought. Overall, this study should stand or fall as an exercise in an open and systematic exploration of meanings attributed to trust by a defined sample of 'international employees' – testimony from whom provides the core contribution of this discussion.

Research performance

A further point of emphasis in the endeavour to express and maintain this 'open system of thought' has been to invoke 'perceptions of trustworthiness' as one potential measure of research / researcher performance. Working to established conceptualisations of a 'psychological contract' already makes such performance measures implicit, as in the extent to which employees might perceive their employers as more or less trustworthy in relation to the explicit and / or implicit

'promises' they over time appear to make and thereby (in theory) render themselves obliged to fulfil (cf. Rousseau, 1990; Robinson, 1995, 1996; Atkinson, 2007): 'don't promise what you can't deliver', as (another) HRM truism has it. Where employees perceive their expectation to be or become unfulfilled notions of contract 'breach' or 'violation' arise (cf. Robinson, 1995, 1996; Si et al, 2009): i.e. the phenomenon that continues to attract the bulk of empirical research into the psychological contract (cf. Conway & Briner, 2007). In contrast, this current study has sought to elicit and explore more routine international employee attributions of meaning to trust: i.e. meanings that express the perceptions that underpin their cognitive and affective experiences and expectations of other complex concepts such as 'loyalty' and 'commitment' (cf. Rousseau, 2000; Turnley & Feldman, 1999; Si et al, 2009; Debroux, 2010b). The perspective has therefore been oriented towards the roles that trust as perceptions of trustworthiness might play in persuading international employees to stay or quit an employer, prompted by the non-routine intervention of an empirical researcher asking questions about this.

Parallel research efforts balancing attention to routine as opposed to non-routine perceptions of another party's relative trustworthiness have been conducted in fields for international business and for cross-cultural / international management / HRM research, several of which have inspired and guided this current study (cf. Bijlsma & Van de Bunt, 2003; Child & Möllering, 2003; Tzafrir, 2005). However, to my knowledge this study is the one of few empirical studies to adopt its research focus (i.e. perceptions of trustworthiness supporting individual acts of trust) simultaneously and systematically as a measure of researcher performance (cf. Jackson, 2007b). For, since the experience of designing and conducting the preliminary studies my consistent view has been that, in order to elicit empirical data that might be adjudged to be valid - and thus *effective* in pursuit of a stated research objective - a researcher-researchee relationship based implicitly and, where appropriate and feasible, explicitly on shared perceptions of trustworthiness should be considered an objective guiding processes of research design.

Correspondingly, other generic measures of research performance become operative: e.g. economy, equity, ethics, and efficiency. These measures appear explicitly and implicitly across processes informing the policies and practices of HRM (cf. Huselid, 1995; Huselid et al, 1997), and this regardless of business sector or national context (cf. Flynn, 2007; Jackson, 2007a). Similar measures apply to business, research and, by extension, to the design and implementation of this study. To illustrate in respect of economic performance: as a lone researcher seeking empirically and ethnographically to elicit international – which also means multi-locational – employee perspectives on trust, a considerable amount of international travel was involved. With no access to research funding this research has been conducted in necessary tandem with work-related activities: my professional assignments have funded my research, and simultaneously allowed me access to several of the employees whose contributions are central to this study, hence the emphasis given to convenience sampling in the preliminary studies (cf. Robson, 2002; Saunders et al, 2006). In terms of equity, an ongoing challenge has been processes of respondent selection: i.e. addressing questions as to whom to include, for how long, under what conditions, and why. In effect, some degree of research consistency has been sought by offering each respondent equal opportunity to participate in the data validation process; as outlined in chapter six, with some (albeit, tentative) ‘promise’ of opportunities for professional learning and development as a reward. This was designed on the assumption that employees who bring an international or global mindset to their work and further to their expectation of career development might appreciate this (cf. Sparrow et al, 2004; Briscoe et al, 2009): in research terms, the data generated might also be considered more valid.

Questions of research ethics have been addressed consistently throughout: this study is, after all, about trust, one of the most enduringly complex and controversial of ethical topics (cf. Baier, 1986; Hardin, 1992; MacLeod, 2006). First and foremost, however, this study is about *people* rather than research objects (cf. Dasgupta, 2009). By seeking to work with cross-cultural conceptualisations of trust as expressed among a sample population of

international employees an array of research dilemmas arise. These include ethical dilemmas concerning data disclosure, admissions of bias, and promises of respondent anonymity (cf. Jackson, 2007b). In effect, these dilemmas impact on performance in as much as the researcher involved is willing to address them explicitly (cf. Jackson & Schwegler, 2005).

Where this study has struggled markedly is in terms of efficiency. As new insights emerged from the literature reviews (chapters two to four, and continuing), as the preliminary studies captured in chapter five became extended, and as the research design detailed in chapter six remained as much a process as a product, the processes of data elicitation and validation described through chapters seven and eight appeared to gain a momentum of their own. Is this evidence of researcher incompetence: a loss of research control? Undoubtedly a more competent researcher would have managed all this more efficiently. For, attempting to work towards and within 'an open system of thought' can entail an over-emphasis on process and an under-emphasis on product. On the positive side, however, there is recognition that an intermittent sense of frustration goes with the territory when 'pushing out the frontiers of knowledge in the hope that something useful will be discovered' (Phillips & Pugh, 2006:51-2). This study did not set out to confirm existing maps of a vast, complex and (in truth) poorly chartered territory.

9.3 Critical examination of data

According to Phillips and Pugh (2006) a second aspect of 'good research' involves 'the critical examination of data'. The critical approach adopted in this study was set out in chapter one, drawing on Western (2008) and expressed primarily in the terminology of discourse analysis. To illustrate, interpreting the phrase 'trust in the psychological contract' as a markedly western and scholarly construct was challenged in conceptual terms through the course of the literature reviews and then empirically through the analysis of the data generated during the preliminary and main studies of Parts Two and Three. Emphasising trust *in* the contract helps distinguish this study from the

impressive paper published by Carol Atkinson (2007), as discussed in chapter one. Furthermore, by seeking to develop 'an international employee perspective' a rich array of meanings and practical relevancies attributed to trust emerged that, in sum, might inform future processes of IHRM practice and research. This exercise has to some extent allayed some of the disappointment of encountering so many 'zero' or superficial definitions of 'trust' common to IM, CCM and IHRM literature. However, adopting such a critical stance so early on and maintaining it over time can serve to reinforce researcher bias and inform the acquisition and application of a research discourse that becomes predictable: 'being critical' becomes itself a position of bias. Thus, and despite the invocation of an avowed 'critical approach' towards the selection, reading and interpretation of standard texts about trust, and despite the invocation of an international or cross-cultural perspective on established conceptualisations of the psychological contract, this current study never really escapes from the rational, causal and markedly western 'rule of three' tradition of social scientific and western management research (cf. Comte, 1974). It never really escapes the premise set in chapter one – an impression reinforced in *Figure 9* below.

Critiquing the work of other trust researchers

The paper 'Cultural Differences in the Perception of Trustworthiness' by Miriam Müthel was presented at the 4th Workshop on *Trust within and between Organisations* in Amsterdam in October 2007. I was nominated as *discussant* for the presentation. The paper drew on Müthel's *Doktorarbeit*, which itself represented a reflection on her experience as a consultant trainer of Sino-German project teams in China, previously published as Müthel (2006). The Müthel (2007) paper explores cross-cultural applications of the ABI model and, similar to Tan et al (2007), tests its cross-cultural validity. As with the Tzafrir (2005) paper reviewed in chapter three, Müthel 2007 draws on Doney et al (1998) in assuming the 'uniqueness' of national cultures and thus a reliable basis for explaining and predicting people's trusting attitudes and behaviours. This premise informs her choice of research objectives and questions.

As an initial step, Müthel asks convenience samples of German ($n = 13$) and Chinese ($n = 12$) managers to define 'honesty'. The data generated by this enquiry informed the following paraphrased connotations of trustee 'integrity':

- *Presents the facts, even if perceived (potentially) as negative*
- *Offers transparency in communication of all relevant information*
- *Openly admits mistakes*

Both Müthel 2006 and 2007 conclude that German managers tend to associate 'integrity' with 'active' and open communication styles; Chinese managers emphasise the need to 'admit mistakes' (2007:18-19). Drawing on practical experience in the field and as discussant to this paper I suggested that the Chinese managers in her study might be implying that their German counterparts appeared too self-confident in the 'correctness' of their own approach. Müthel responded by claiming that Chinese managers diverge from their German counterparts in relation to their preference for a 'benevolent' communication style: i.e. one that appeared actively to avoid causing loss of face (Müthel, 2007:22).

The emphasis given to 'avoiding loss of face' is apposite here. Firstly because 'how to' books of IM and CCT commonly posit this phenomenon to be 'typical' for - or even 'unique' to - Asian and notably Chinese business cultures (cf. Blackman, 1997; Ambler et al, 2009). It is not; for this exploration of the social phenomenon that is trust has demonstrated that all human beings as social actors feel essentially vulnerable; re-invoking Rousseau et al (1998), this is why people trust. I refer to the Miriam Müthel's study here because of the opportunity it gave me - as nominated discussant, before an audience of research peers - to critique the design and implementation of another empirical researcher's work. I was able to question the size and selection of the sample populations, some of the assumptions that appeared to underpin the approach taken and the findings proposed. By engaging publicly in the 'critical examination of data' required by Phillips and Pugh (2006) I was able to identify weaknesses in my own design, and this more vividly and vitally than if I had only read the Müthel (2007) paper. This was a valuable and formative experience, and one reciprocated when

receiving feedback on papers I have presented at conferences, seminars and workshops.

9.4 Generalisability

The third characteristic highlighted by Phillips and Pugh is that of researchers using their understanding and interpretation of data to ‘generalize and specify the limits on their generalizations’ (2006:49). Consistent attempts have been made here to match this challenge by combining a temporal, spatial and then individual anchoring of empirical and ethnographic research data, emulating a so-called *verstehend* approach (cf. Gold, 1997; Ray, 2007). However, the choice of this particular ethnographic method compromises attempts to generalise from primary data – an insight rehearsed in previous chapters. Although common, attempts to ‘generalise up’ from micro-level data as elicited from individual respondents to macro-level conclusions (e.g. at the level of organisations or even nation states) is compelling (cf. Child, 2001; Child & Möllering, 2003), complex (cf. Curral & Inkpen, 2006), and fraught with controversy: e.g. McSweeney (2002) versus Hofstede (2002); Hardin (1992) versus Baier (1986). This study has done little – effectively – to allay such controversy.

Learning potential

As an expressly micro- and (*pace* Russell Hardin) ‘employee-level’ response this current study represents a systematic attempt to design and conduct ‘trustworthy’ and ethically grounded research. My research assumptions were made explicit in chapters one and six and their general applicability tested throughout the discussion. Respondents have been included as stakeholders in the data validation processes. These design choices and measures represent no startling innovation in trust research. However, after a general scan across trust and psychological contract research they do appear unusual (cf. Conway and Briner, 2007). Anecdotal evidence suggests that this approach to trust research does appear to promote learning and development by those who participate in it, thus fulfilling one the key research ambitions that emerged during the

preliminary studies before becoming formalised in the final research design. However, the question remains open as to whether this learning potential is communicated to those who might read this study looking for guidance in how to enter and navigate empirical research into trust and / or into how human trusting attitudes and behaviours might be interpreted within and across contexts for IHRM.

From my current position I cannot assess the extent to which this endeavour might succeed; for although sections of this study have been aired and shared with a range of stakeholders described as 'audience' in chapter one, as a final product the text in its entirety has been read and commented on exclusively by the PhD examiners involved, members of my supervisory panel, and interested scholar-practitioner colleagues. However, as a *process* the text has been subject to ongoing 'inner dialogue' with myself and, at various high points in its development, with the research respondents who contributed formatively to its current form. This dialogue offers no guarantee of success; however, it does give evidence of a critical and reflexive research commitment.

9.5 Connecting with emerging streams of trust research

Echoing Phillips and Pugh (2006) the much-vaunted 'originality' measure of this type of research tends to be exaggerated: studies of this type rarely prompt a paradigm shift. They remain spatially and conceptually embedded in the literature out of which they emerged. They might, though, shed some new light and / or suggest new angles or connections between established concepts and insights that might be further explored. A study designed to explore meanings attributed to a research concept as complex and as paradoxical as trust is bound to miss opportunities for deeper interpretation and critical understanding. A frank and open identification of these opportunities as 'missed' might open doors for further conceptual, experimental and empirical research.

To illustrate, one recent compendium of trust research in Europe and North America (Bachmann & Zaheer, 2006) has been much quoted in this study and has provided a 'keystone' point of reference in the journey thus far. The book

provides a vivid example of trust research as both process and product. To illustrate, Jackson (2007b) notes how, at a launch event for the book, the two editors - Reinhard Bachmann and Akbar (Aks) Zaheer - explained how the editorial process had become an exercise in 'cross-cultural communication', where the empirical approach to research - supporting often highly generalised conclusions about human trusting behaviours - preferred by US-based contributors frequently conflicted with the more theoretical approach commonly preferred by their European counterparts, whose conclusions tended to be more cautiously specific. The editors had invited contributors from each academic community to read the others' drafts. The result became a practical and tangible example of how (professional) credibility, trust and mutual respect can be negotiated across cultures. It also offers a timely reminder of how the experience of the lone researcher into trust becomes not only one of 'struggling to find out what the right questions might be' (Phillips & Pugh, 2006:48); it also becomes one of struggling to accommodate all the hints of answers that might emerge on each research horizon.

For the combined fixed and flexible design of this study has managed to connect with some of the recommendations made, for example, by prominent conceptual and empirical researchers into trust. For example, and as alluded to above, in the aforementioned Bachmann and Zaheer collection Currell and Inkpen (2006:243) urge empirical trust researchers to:

- *Study the organizational context of trust by studying trust at other levels*

This entails tuning in to 'the historical conditions and circumstances underlying trust between persons [i.e. individuals], groups and organizations' (2006:243). In this current study the 'organisational context' was only conceptually defined against the 'three-box' model of the psychological contract (*Figure 1*) and as a bounded concept left open to each respondent's perception and experience. The rationale here has been to avoid the agency dilemma apparent in much contract research (cf. Conway & Briner, 2007). It was interesting, therefore, to recognise how readily respondents invoked ORG as context during the semi-structured interviews. However, it should be noted that this was an initiative of

the research respondents involved rather than an *a priori* choice of the researcher. For, by adopting an individual employee perspective on trust in the psychological contract (cf. Rousseau, 1995, 1998, 2010) 'the organisation' might be conceptualised as 'the employer', or even 'they' or 'them' – a potential that accords with developing an open and ethnographic approach to trust research. Consequently, the 'levels of analysis' structured into this current study are primarily of the dyadic individual (researcher) to individual (research respondent) type, triangulated (as illustrated in *Figure 5*) with reference to research literature and the respondent's own invocation of 'social reality'. This metaphorical treatment of 'the organisation' is illustrated most vividly in the conversation testimony of **J4**, the Japanese *salaryman* concerned about his son's future employment prospects. As stated previously, this open-ended approach generates problems of research reliability, and thus of generalisability. On the other hand it serves potentially to enhance researcher performance in terms of credibility, perceived trustworthiness and, not least, of research *validity*.

Bracketing trust

A further recommendation made by Currell and Inkpen (2006:243) is to:

- *Bracket trust by studying trust below or above it*

In this current study the 'bracketing' process began in chapter one, where a discourse analysis approach towards interpreting the phrase 'trust in the psychological contract' was initiated. Indeed, this recommendation suggests diverse types or interpretations of trust. Correspondingly, the semantic spaces 'below and above' this conceptualisation of trust were explored by generating a cross-cultural perspective on trust during the preliminary studies (cf. Child & Möllering, 2003; Tan et al, 2007) and the introduction of the Q1 survey instrument, designed and implemented in order to initiate a longitudinal and ethnographically-oriented exploration of these spaces through semi-structured interviews and conversations. Pursuing a more systematically cross-cultural agenda than that proposed by Currell and Inkpen (2006) this study has attempted to 'bracket trust' conceptually in reference to the East Asian concept expressed as 信. Unfortunately, the attempt to bracket or define these spaces

further with reference to respondent variables such as nationality, gender and age produced only mixed results – and inconclusive, in as much as they are unable to support firm generalisations.

Underexplored dimensions of trust

McKnight and Chervany (2006) identify a series of ‘ongoing research puzzles and possibilities’. These include:

- *Time and fragility*
- *Social rumor and technology effects on trust development*
- *Trust factors: a complex interconnected network*
- *Distrust versus trust*
- *Methods and measurement*

By locating the exploration of meanings attributed to trust both empirically and ethnographically in contexts for interpreting and negotiating the psychological contract the ‘fragility’ of trust becomes apparent in employee decisions to quit or stay – a line of enquiry that began as a reflexive exercise in chapter five. This line of exploration was inspired in part by Kurihara (2006) and her application (reviewed in chapter four) of the Japanese *se-ken* concept as a vehicle for illustrating the development and expression of individual identity in contexts for international employment and ethnographic research in organisations. My reflection thus guided, her experience appeared to connect with and mirror my own experience as an international employee / manager.

Explorations of the ‘fragility’ of western (e.g. English language) conceptualisations and definitions of trust have also formed a constant theme. As highlighted in chapter three connecting with psychological contract research entails connecting with an emphasis on perceived breaches of trust. The empirical data presented here has illustrated single and collective patterns of responses that might lead to employee perceptions of breach. The longitudinal emphasis of the interviews and conversations combined with a research performance measure of ‘perceived trustworthiness’ has served to emphasise

the time and processual dimensions of trust. This has further served to 'release' trust – conceptually, at least - from its anchored position in the 'content' box of the psychological contract (cf. *Figure 1*) and to highlight the dynamism of the concept by emphasising *trusting* as a core process in forming and sustaining the type of dyadic researcher / respondent and, by extension, employee / employer relationships. Some conceptual implications of this insight are illustrated below (*Figure 8*). The spatial anchoring of the concept was tested further by means of data generation and validation processes that routinely proceeded via Email and Skype™. However, just as McKnight and Chervany (2006) emphasise how all relationships 'start somewhere', so all relationships must one day end: a recurring research dilemma has been how to end the conversations, and at what point to record them as ended.

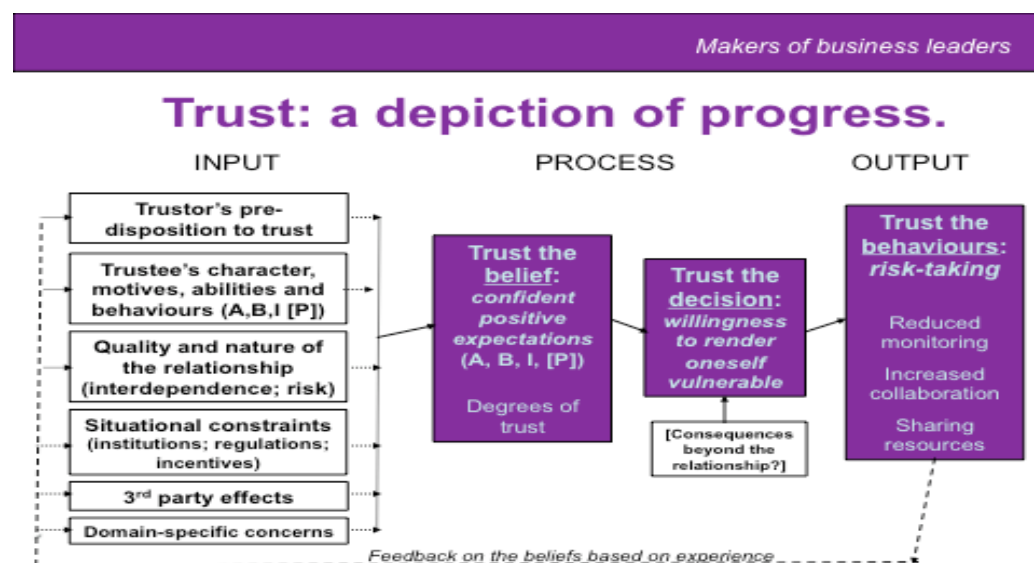
Correspondingly, the open-ended *verstehend* design of the conversations detailed in chapter eight allows space for 'social rumours' to be aired – as evinced in the **G1** testimony: his perception of crisis was nowhere established in shared fact. The combined exploration of 'trust' and 'distrust' together with related conceptualisations of 'trustworthiness' and 'untrustworthiness' emerged during the combined literature reviews and gained salience – albeit fuzzily - during the preliminary and primary studies. Here again, cross-cultural dimensions of the trust / distrust tension were highlighted (cf. Mead & Andrews, 2009). During this process the concept of *self-trust* emerged (unexpectedly!) to salience. However, here as elsewhere in this study the (research) 'methods and measurement' aspects of trust research have been problematic, and notably in respect of research reliability.

As reported in chapter two, such problems of measurement appear endemic to trust research (cf. McKnight & Chervany, 1995, 2006). It is therefore understandable why Cural and Inkpen (2006:244) encourage trust researchers to 'triangulate trust measures' and 'use longitudinal research designs to examine the co-evolution of trust across levels'. It was in order to address such issues that processes of data validation linked to measures of research validity have been given such prominence.

Progress?

Something of the current trajectory of trust research was outlined in chapter two. The prisoner's dilemma remains a mainstay of experimental research, feeding on the attention still accorded to commercially sponsored game theory research (cf. Huxham & Vangen, 2005). By extension, much empirical research is attracted towards exploring the role of trust in shaping interaction within and across virtual project teams (cf. Lee-Kelley, 2006, 2008) and in contexts for e-commerce (cf. McKnight & Chervany, 2001; McKnight & Choudhury, 2006; Xiao & Benbasat, 2003, 2007). As a parallel investigation, commercial interest continues to be drawn towards understanding how perceptions of trustworthiness influences leader-follower relationships (cf. Kanter, 1983; Northhouse, 2001; Dirks, 2006). The concept of *self-trust* might be a relevant addition to this research effort. Against this background, Dietz (2009) visualises the current state of trust research as follows:

Figure 7: Trust research: a depiction of progress



Source: Dietz (2009) – used with permission

As illustrated in previous chapters, the debate surrounding the definition of key terms is ongoing: typologies of trust continue to expand; zero definitions of trust continue to prevail, and especially in the 'how to' management literature. With *Figure 7* Dietz confirms where the potential for future research value added appears to lie: e.g. exploring linkages between conceptualisations and

application of 'inputs', 'processes' and 'outputs'; asking critical questions of previously established linkages in our understanding of trust; developing multi-disciplinary and cross-cultural empirically-researched perspectives on trust (Graham Dietz, 2009 – *personal communication*).

9.6 Connecting with emerging streams of psychological contract research

From a novice trust researcher perspective it is reassuring to recognise how, in view of the ongoing complexity of the research terrain, the I > P > O system with its emphasis on dynamic (albeit implied) linkages still reflects the current state of play in both trust (cf. *Figure 7*) and, as illustrated in chapter three, in psychological contract research. Cross-disciplinarity appears a valid route forward in both fields of research (cf. Rousseau, et al, 1998). For both *Figure 7* and the empirical data presented in chapter seven and elsewhere in this study highlight a need to understand more precisely and cross-culturally the what, how and why that describes the linkages between the assumed and inferred 'inputs', 'processes' and 'outputs / outcomes' of trust (cf. Nooteboom, 2006). There is a need to explore these linkages empirically and longitudinally (Conway & Briner, 2007). There is a need to base such explorations on a critical understanding of the academic cultures that continue to promote and generalise upon such linkages (Reinhard Bachmann, 2007- *personal communication*).

For according to Maxwell (1996:25), a conceptual framework represents a 'system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs and theories that supports and informs [your] research'. The psychological contract is one such framework: it stands now as an established 'theoretical framework' (Rousseau, 1998; Guest, 1998; Conway & Briner, 2007) within which to 'test out' (Phillips & Pugh, 2006) meanings attributed to trust as a core element in making sense of the psychological contract both conceptually and empirically. Focussing exclusively on English language research, Conway and Briner (2007) identify an enduring lack of empirical research into the contract and, moreover, only patchy research into specific elements of 'content' as 'vital for elaborating (our) understanding of how employees understand and describe key aspects of the psychological contract' (Conway & Briner, 2007:97). One of these 'key aspects' is

trust – commonly referred to explicitly in psychological contract research; however, just as commonly left undefined by the researchers involved. Paraphrasing from Dietz (2009), although ‘trust’ appears established as a core element of content in the psychological contract, its definition singly and in relation to other content elements remains open to interpretation. Consequently, the theme of ‘trust in the psychological contract’ remains - along with conceptualisations of the contract itself - a ‘work in progress’ (cf. Dundon, 2010).

Voice

As highlighted in chapter three, this current study represents an attempt longitudinally and ethnographically to build on the exemplary PhD thesis written by Neil Conway (1999). There as here an attempt has been made here to allow time and space for the ‘voice’ (cf. Marchington, 2005; Cruise O’Brien, 2001) of individual respondents to be expressed: primarily, these are respondents as full-time employees as opposed to respondents as full-time students in some North American business school where much conceptual research into the psychological contract is conducted (cf. Conway & Briner, 2007). Conway (1999) developed a respondent diary approach in an attempt to highlight some of the more routine employee interpretations and experiences of the contract – an approach mirrored in this current study through a process of shared data validation and (intended) professional development. However, although valid and well intentioned these research approaches can be resource-intensive. To illustrate, members of the Hong Kong Focus Group explained how they routinely spent more than one hour each working day archiving Email correspondence ‘just in case’ they might need this information during a dispute with their employer: i.e. the type of time and concentration pressures that full-time students in business schools might be able to avoid. The decision was thus made to concentrate on orally based research approaches (interviews and conversations) and use written texts primarily during the validation data process. Given that all the respondents involved in this study were engaged in full-time employment, the validation process commonly became stretched

through time, thus undermining attempts to plan and conduct the research efficiently.

As highlighted in the literature reviews, this current study has been designed to explore diverse perspectives on what trust might mean in contexts for interpreting and negotiating the psychological contract – an intention realised in chapter seven. Here interviewees chose to ‘voice’ and highlight a number of items that do not appear explicitly in established depictions of the psychological contract. Coded, these items include: *independence* (**INDEP**), *process* (**PROC**), *system* (**SYST**), *team* (**TEAM**). Other data elicited suggested how future contract research might explore employee experiences of different types of **ORG** and of (Org) **CULT**, *expectations* of **REL**, and – as emphasised throughout this study – diverse meanings attributed to **TRUST**. Adopting any one of these offers an opportunity to develop a broader range of real world perspectives on trust.

Generalisability

By linking the subsequent conversations about trust to prospective employee decisions to quit or stay an attempt has been made similarly to explore such conceptual additions to established contract research and, simultaneously, connect with the Conway and Briner recommendation to ‘examine causal relationships’ within and beyond conceptualisations of the contract and, where feasible, ‘to generalise findings across cases’ (2007:97). According to these two experts the generalisation effort remains an undeveloped aspect of psychological contract research. In chapter eight a case was made to generalise findings across individual employee cases. However, and as highlighted there and again in this chapter (above), the reliability of the data suggests that such generalisations can be only tentative. One result of this current study is that the boundaries of established conceptualisations of trust in the psychological contract remain discernible; they have (at best?) become more ‘fuzzy’ (cf. Polezzi & di Napoli, 2001). Nonetheless, by using a standard model of the psychological contract explicitly across all interviews there are grounds for generalisation from the coding analysis of elements captured in the model and, as highlighted above, of

elements that interviewees (i.e. as opposed to researchers) chose to infer from this depiction of the contract. Some attempt has been made to profile these respondent choices according to variables of age, gender and nationality. Nonetheless, the generalisation rests only tentatively on the claim that these choices might be representative of a segment population of employees defined in this current study as 'international employees'.

Linking trust and contract research

In a brief survey of psychological contract research Dundon (2010) highlights three enduring challenges to established conceptualisations of the psychological contract. He recognises that no one or clear definition of the concept exists: research attention has become mired, for example, in exploration comparing implicit and explicit obligations and promises. He also highlights the subjective nature of the 'contract metaphor' as it is currently understood and debated over by prominent contract researchers (cf. Rousseau, 1998; Guest, 1998). Citing Guest (1998:652), Dundon (2010:211) notes that 'where the implicit encounters the implicit, the result may be two strangers passing blindfold and in the dark, disappointed at their failure to meet'. It is striking how these three 'challenges' could be applied equally to the current state of trust research as illustrated by Dietz (2009) above.

As highlighted above, the approach taken in this current study is to allow space for respondents to 'define' the concept individually as they attempt to apply it to their own experience, perceptions and expectations attending 'trust' within and across their various employment relationships. However, adopting this approach appears to contradict the third of Tony Dundon's challenges in that much psychological contract research ignores or underestimates the complex 'structural, institutional and social tensions that exist in the workplace' (Dundon, 2010:212). This criticism connects with the aforementioned 'levels of analysis' recommendation by Cural and Inkpen (2006) in respect of organisation-based trust research. The argument here is that individual level trust research might gain enhanced credibility and wider perceptions of relevance if supplemented

by, for example, team-level and organisation-level empirical research (cf. Farndale et al, 2007). However, a problem here again becomes which or whose conceptualisation of trust - and thus bias - should obtain. Again, perhaps the true research valued added lies in the process of negotiated meaning rather than in a product of, for example, a 'new' definition or type of trust to add to the already burgeoning list.

Consequently, one striking limitation of this current study is its focus on individual (employee) level analysis: by design, the researcher role has routinely been one as a 'sounding board' to employee voices. In chapter five it was highlighted how the original study design allowed for the researcher to form a triad with individual employees and their performance appraisers. Perhaps this more triangulated approach should have been relocated and pursued further. Perhaps the HKFG (focus group) primary study should have been developed throughout the piece. As it stands, emphasising the dyadic researcher-research respondent relationship threatens the perceived reliability of the data it generates and furthermore the generalisability of the findings drawn from analyses of these data. On the positive side, however, this consistent focus on eliciting individual employee perceptions, experiences and expectations in relation to trust in the psychological contract does form the basis for the type of professional learning and development highlighted in chapter six as one of the key purposes of this particular research design. Furthermore, working with and (to a limited extent) generalising across individual employee perceptions and experiences of trust in no way compromises the stated research objective.

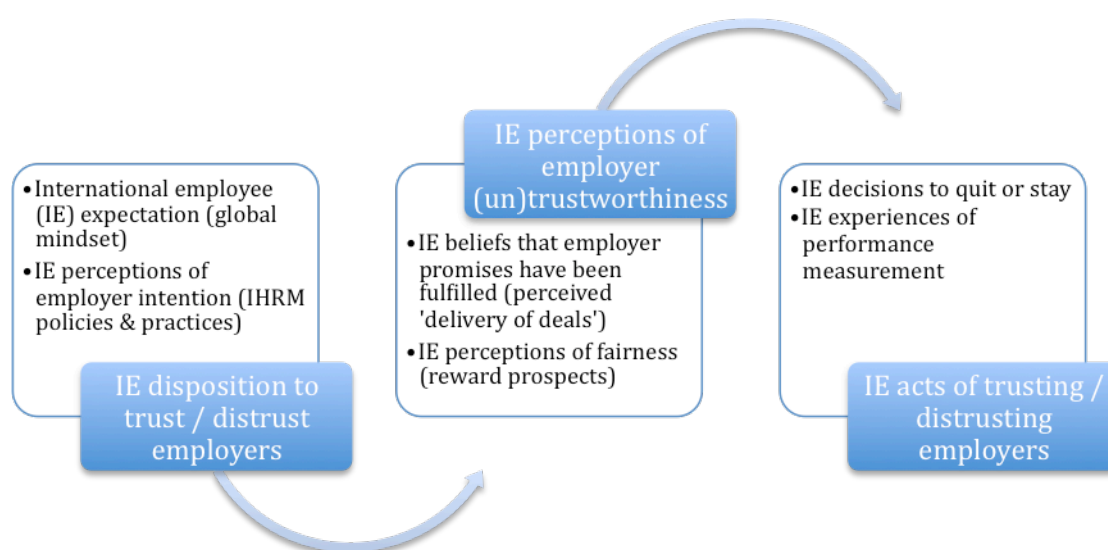
Reconfiguring the psychological contract

Developing a multi- and cross-disciplinary perspective Rousseau et al (1998) posit that trust can be understood as a distinctly human 'psychological state' that, echoing Banerjee et al (2006), encapsulates something essential of inherent human experiences of vulnerability prompted by each individual's perceptions of the uncertainty that surrounds them and each risk-laden decision they might make. The emphasis in this study has been on interpersonal expressions of trust;

- or, rather, of trust-*ing*. This processual emphasis supports my choice to steer the research towards eliciting and exploring the sense making factors invoked by international employees as they perceive other people - including line-managers and trust researchers - as more or less trustworthy (cf. Yamagishi, 2005). This view challenges (conceptually, at least) the salience commonly attributed to 'trust' as a centrally located 'content' element implicit in established depictions of the psychological contract, as exemplified by *Figure 1*. This epistemological statement appears to say as much about the 'state of mind' (e.g. causal, rational, linear) that western researchers commonly bring towards examining psychological contracts as what 'trust' might (or should?) mean when contextualised in this way.

Summarising from the conceptual journey thus far, a working depiction of 'trust in the psychological contract' might (going forward) look something like this:

Figure 8: *Trust in the psychological contract: international employee perspective*



Source: *own design*

A few words of explanation. In comparison to *Figure 1*:

- The outer box boundary formerly attributed to 'the organisation' has disappeared: the global mindset of international employees (IEs) prompts them to locate themselves dynamically in international markets for employment and career development, both internal and external to

whatever represents the employing organisation at any time. The course of the connecting arrows reinforces this idea.

- Correspondingly, the removal of the outer (organisation-specific) boundary means that 'the employment relationship' – like all social relationships – merges into the surrounding environment or contexts, defined incrementally and iteratively by IE perceptions of uncertainty, risk, and career development opportunities.
- Developing on Atkinson (2007), reading *Figure 8* suggests not only that 'trust is present in all psychological contracts'; it further suggests that trust is present *across* and *through* all psychological contracts.

This suggested reconfiguration of trust in the psychological contract represents a 'work in progress' – much as established conceptualisations of the contract continue to do (Dundon, 2010). It reflects the 'rule of three' linearity and causality evident in *Figure 1*. However, it also summarises a systematic attempt to 'test out the limits of previously proposed generalizations' (Phillips and Pugh, 2006:52) by emphasising the perspective (i.e. perceptions, experiences and expectations) of *international* employees. For here as elsewhere in this study a potentially important message appears. This is that 'trust' - interpreted as an expression of human trusting perceptions, attitudes and behaviours - might be interpreted as flowing through conceptualisations of the contract. Consequently, emphasising 'trust' as *trusting* is a process whose 'beginning and end' in such contexts can be found and elicited from within the individual employee as s/he negotiates a relationship of employment – an image that recalls Kurihara (2006) navigating her path across a typical Japanese open plan office.

This processual and iterative interpretation of trust challenges the attempts made by a multitude of empirical researchers to identify (for example) 'antecedents' and 'outcomes' of human / employee trusting behaviours (cf. Bijlsma & Van de Bunt, 2003; Tzafirir, 2005). Rather, the above depiction connects more with the view developed by Alex Wright and Ina Ehnert (2010:110):

- *Actors are never in any particular state of trust, but are in a ceaseless and uneven flow of trusting. As contexts unfold the need for trusting activity fluctuates.*

9.7 Key limitations: research opportunities

Against the background of what established researchers of trust have achieved this current study appears to be replete with missed opportunities. Several have been highlighted already. Those listed here are highlighted in order to suggest future opportunities for trust and psychological contract research.

Limitation 1: Researcher bias

From chapter one onwards explicit attempts have been made to highlight and work with researcher bias. As indicated above, despite these attempts the discussion and analysis never manage convincingly to break free of the rational and causal tradition of western sociological research. The structure of this study reflects an adherence to the 'rule of three' bias highlighted in chapter one: nine chapters divided into three Parts; each chapter with nine numbered headings, and each working with models and metaphors structured in threes; a concluding chapter guided by reference to *three* characteristics of 'good' research.

Recommendation 1: Elicit a 'period eye'

In exploring something as complex and as intimately human as trust more use might be made of images rather than written text in order to connect directly with the rational and affective dimensions of the trust phenomenon (cf. McAllister, 1995): as researchers we can attempt to develop a 'period eye'. To illustrate from a western cultural perspective, this 'eye' can take on a distinctly moral and markedly ethnocentric expression (cf. Baier, 1986; Jones, 1986), and particularly when applied in contexts for cross-cultural communication and knowledge sharing (cf. Benedict, 1946; Mead, 1972). To illustrate, the early Renaissance painter Masaccio depicted the Trinity (1427) applying one of the earliest recorded uses in Europe of perspective as a painterly device, thus re-affirming the rule of three trope in western thought. The main figures (including sponsors) are arranged around a crucifixion scene. The fresco has a startling effect to this day, for it resembles a small window though the church wall. According to Gombrich, to the medieval mind the effect would be: 'we feel we

can almost touch them, and this feeling brings their message nearer to us' (1995:173). One lesson here relates to how human perceptions of time and space can be 'managed' in order that an artist / craftsman might communicate a complex message. The management attempt is effective because it demonstrates the artist's sensitivity towards what Baxandall (1972) terms 'the period eye'.

A future opportunity for trust researchers is to elicit and work with the period eye of their research respondents. For example, in the Müthel (2007) study cited above the research respondents might have been invited to re-order and / or re-label the ABI elements to suit their current and changing needs and situation-specific expectations. In chapter seven of this current study the interviewees could have been invited to re-model the psychological contract according to their own perception and experience - their own 'period eye'. Arguments against such an approach might be that cultural values and norms are too embedded: scholarly constructs are to be respected and adhered to for the sake of research reliability and credibility – and this as an expression of 'faith' (McSweeney, 2002). As illustrated in respect of the remarkably resilient Hofstede (1980) model there is sufficient discord in the international 'academic community' to support such experimentation and in current contexts for IHRM research the 'period eye' appears blurred. According to one prominent scholar in this field 'national culture just does not seem to matter that much' (David Guest, 2007 – *personal communication*) while another insists that 'countries and their cultures remain stubborn in their refusal to converge' (Chris Brewster, 2006 – *personal communication*).

Echoing Western (2008), before getting to grips with the assumed or ascribed culture of research respondents it is as well to explore and map out the competing culture(s) of the research terrain that these respondents are being invited to enter. It is as well to make bias explicit and work with integrity within its limitations, using these to frame and foreground processes of research validity rather than contrived structures of research reliability: the picture not the frame is what 'brings messages nearer' to people.

Limitation 2: Performance measurement

In chapter six and again here much has been made of 'trustworthiness' as a measure of researcher performance. On this basis claims for data validity have been posited, albeit with due caution. In an attempt to bridge between theory and practice parallels have been drawn with researcher and HRM practitioner performance and the type of 'dilemmas' each routinely faces in respect of trust-control decisions (cf. Handy, 1993, Jackson, 2007b). As illustrated in the Tzafrir (2005) article reviewed in chapter three, linking HRM researcher and practitioner inputs to quantifiable measures of performance outputs and outcomes commonly rests on techniques whose design is guided by speculation – another way of saying 'by expressions of faith' (McSweeney, 2002).

As in the Masaccio example (above) the researcher is manager of the research process, even if explicit offers are made to design the research relationship as a form of partnership (Ray, 2007) or as a mutually beneficial collaboration (Foley & Valenzuela, 2005). However, no explicit 'scale of perceived trustworthiness' enquiry is offered; no compelling evidence for claiming the researcher and research respondent formed an effective 'high trust team' (cf. Druskat & Wolff, 2008) other than the evidence manifest in the open exchange of words, attitudes and insights over time – a feature assumed to indicate the expression of a global mindset in contexts for IHRM practice (cf. Sparrow et al, 2004; Takeuchi & Nonaka, 2004; Steers et al, 2010). Useful here would have been a third-party intervention by a researcher asking respondents whether they trusted the researcher; for the evidence for trustworthy research is found only implicitly in the quality of the data generated and selected for presentation, and in the fact that several respondents chose to continue their participation and thereby the research relationship.

Recommendation 2: Teamwork

Throughout this discussion the problem of working with and to under-defined processes of human perception: the process is fundamental to conceptualisations and empirical investigations of trust (cf. Yamagishi, 2005; Child & Möllering, 2003). However, the process is so rarely defined in anything

approaching operational terms. Consequently, problems of working with (*managing?*) human perception in trust research might be mitigated in a number of ways. As suggested above, one is by triangulating the research effort (Denzin, 2007). This might mean working in teams of three or more researchers, interviewing each respondent at least twice with one interviewer being a known person and the other a stranger, and with each interviewer asking respondents explicitly whether the quality and content of the data they provided is related to their perception of the interviewer's relative trustworthiness. As with all such decisions, practical problems will arise. For example, Chinese and Turkish respondents might react negatively to explicit questions about the extent to which they perceive the researcher to be trustworthy (S. Wasti, 2007 – *personal communication*): 'if you have to ask me, how trustworthy can you be?' Conversely, the trust researcher cannot *know* that respondents are trustworthy enough to tell the truth – a doubt that influences measures of research validity and reliability (Dean & Whyte, 1958; Arber, 1993; Robson, 2002). In contexts for trust research it appears relevant to ensure that one member of the research team is a psychologist skilled in interpreting processes of human perception. All team members should receive psychological training in what diverse 'period eyes' perceive as 'trustworthy / untrustworthy', 'truthful' or 'factual', and why. Cross-cultural researchers should, like international managers, be trained in the development and demonstration of relevant cross-cultural competencies (cf. Mead, 2005; Jackson, 2007a): i.e. the type of 'multicultural competencies' attributed to international employees in chapter four (cf. Schneider & Barsoux, 2003; Briscoe et al, 2009; Steers et al, 2010). The back-translation exercise undertaken by Hwee Hoon Tan and her colleagues for Tan et al (2007) offers an example of how process as much as product can promote team learning and professional development, assuming its details are disseminated widely and reliably enough. Preparing for such teamwork might involve technical exercises linked to yet superficially distinct from research focussed on trust: e.g. by developing and sharing a cross-disciplinary understanding of how to award a PhD in fine art or music (cf. Barnett 2001).

Limitation 3: Sampling

The choice to design in space and time for research respondents to negotiate the research process and its interim findings raises fundamental questions about sampling and respondent selection. Do all respondents want to exercise this choice? The review of IM, CC; and IHRM literature in chapter four assumes that employees designated as 'international' would be prepared to make this choice, motivated by (among other perceived benefits) curiosity, a promise of professional learning and development, and a propensity to seek 'locus of control' approach to their individual engagement with tasks - and people - that interest them. I cannot guarantee that each participant who volunteered to move beyond Q1 to the interview stage might be defined steadfastly as 'international'; nor can I claim that those who did not choose to proceed should be deemed less 'international'. I do know that these participants were busy people, almost uniformly mid-career professionals, and with no other incentive to participate than what they rationalised for themselves. And where there was some motive beyond participation in this research (e.g. J4 with concerns for his son's education) this was made explicit and input into the respondent participation process. From a researcher perspective the risk of receiving a 'no' answer is probably heightened when working with convenience samples: the 'yes' response is therefore the more professionally satisfying. However, the size of the sample population that did volunteer compares favourably with other comparable empirical research projects discussed elsewhere in this study.

As indicated there, several of these research studies apply convenience sampling - a common enough decision in social scientific and business / management research, although its use is seldom explicitly admitted (Arber, 1993; Robson, 2002). To illustrate, for her PhD thesis Müthel (2007) works with two convenience samples of German managers ($n = 13$) and Chinese managers ($n = 12$). Technically, these samples are too small to support generalisations about nationality or any other independent variable (Mertens, 1998). The approach taken in this current study incorporates a much larger and more diverse population, hence the rather aspirational 'international employee' segmentation outlined in chapter four. From experience, the aggregate profile of the sample

population of employees who participated in this study appears representative when compared to the profile of many MNCs I have worked in, whether located in Europe or in developed economic zones in Asia. But how strictly reliable can such a claim be? Data on the mix of employee nationalities are available on many MNC homepages: these statistics often appear as an invitation for 'internationally minded employees' to apply. However, in developing an international employee perspective on trust there is a need to elicit the attitudes, experiences and expectations of these employees directly – and this takes time, access and opportunity – resources that a lone researcher struggles to create.

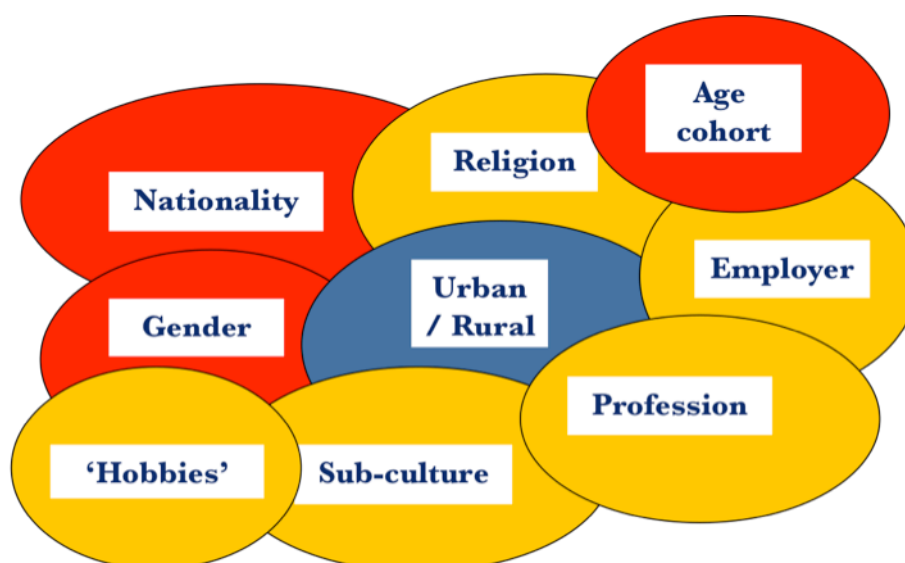
Recommendation 3: Sample (self-)profiling

Any empirical research intervention - indeed, any HRM intervention - risks investing an expenditure of resources that might never be recovered. A further inevitable risk is that that this investment might not support achievement of the intended objectives: they support analyses of ROI. It is here that preliminary studies are important as they offer an opportunity to rehearse both the investment and the achievement of objectives. As highlighted in chapter five they also offer an opportunity to rehearse and develop the type of 'open system of thought' and 'critical examination of data' recommended by Phillips & Pugh (2006). One approach towards reducing the risk of this investment and (perhaps) simultaneously the risks of research unreliability and invalidity is to invite research respondents to select themselves. Just as 'talented' employees might know their true market value more precisely than their employers / line-managers at any one time, so 'international employees' might be better able to identify themselves if researchers were more in tune with how they identify themselves within a global population of possible research respondents. For example, the sample population comprising the members of the GMI at Thunderbird appear confident enough to proclaim in their training and in their research (cf. Swain, 2009). Except in special circumstances such as 'headhunting', this is how recruitment and selection works in the real world of IHRM practice: why should IHRM researchers know or perform any more

effectively? One thinks here of Hofstede's identification of 'the Chinese' or (*pace* McSweeney, 2002) 'the Yugoslavians'.

Graham Dietz (2009) illustrates one approach towards this objective. Citing Chao and Moon (2005) he explains how individuals as social actors assume diverse roles. Consequently, each individual develops a 'cultural mosaic' by means of which they express their own sense of cultural and sub-cultural identity.

Figure 9: *The cultural mosaic*



Source: Dietz (2009), adapted from Chao and Moon (2005) - *reproduced with permission.*

The image of the 'mosaic' is established in HRM research into diversity (cf. Kandola & Fullerton, 1998). Applying the metaphor might help Kurihara (2006) make sense of and communicate how she infers her work colleagues perceive her; of how she in return might identify herself in such contexts; and of how other researchers might seek to emulate her distinctive approach to ethnographic research into trust. In fact, the above conceptualisation of researchee identity strongly resembles that proposed previously by Schneider and Barsoux (2003:210) - Chao and Moon refer only to Schneider (1987) - who attribute multiple identities to individuals, individual employees and, by extension, to individual research respondents. Chao and Moon (2005:1133)

usefully offer a 'bipartite representation of the cultural mosaic' that might further guide researchers predict and (if preferred) 'control' the aspect of individual respondent identity they wish to focus on eliciting and / or inferring.

Drawing on his own experience of organisation-based trust research (cf. Dietz, 2004), Dietz (2009) observes how individual respondents appear to express values that explain more about their experience of organisation ('employer') than their experience of 'nationality'. Adopting the combined role of research respondent / potential trustor, an employee might choose to project one cultural identity rather than another to a trust researcher: e.g. the 'professional' rather than the 'age cohort' aspect of their multi-role profile, and 'career portfolio' rather than 'employer' to express a self-styled image (cf. Duggan & Jurgens, 2006).

Consequently, a major challenge for the trust researcher remains to understand and / or predict what influence his / her approach and perceived intention might match the respondent's preferred choice of 'tile'. Paraphrasing from Allport (1958), the 'tile' that the trust research respondent might most want to express would affirm identification with the 'we' of an in-group defined along psychological (perceptual) lines rather than, for example, in nationality terms. Drawing on (1958:35), the 'we' expressed in the researcher / respondent dyad might seek to express to and with the researcher a shared 'international perspective' and, more immediately, a 'shared perception' of research trustworthiness as opposed to a 'pre-judged' and imposed perception of researcher control. Social researchers are warned to be sensitive to 'social desirability' responses distorting the validity and reliability of their data (Robson, 2002). However, reference to *Figure 9* suggests that many researchers - wittingly or otherwise - actively court this type of response, probably in an attempt to control inputs and thereby the hypothesised links to the outputs they seek. This limitation is evident in the early stages of this current study and subsequently (to a degree) rectified by the progressively 'individual anchoring' of the empirical research in chapter eight.

9.8 Self-trust

The emergence of *self-trust* as a concept worthy of future research represents one of the more striking and unexpected outcomes of this study. Brief reference had been made to how Luhmann (2000) links *Vertrauen* (trust) and *Selbstvertrauen* (self-trust) - also commonly linked with *Selbstwert* or perceptions of 'self-worth' or 'self-esteem'. The Jackson and Tomioka (2004) study cited during the pilot studies drew on Mead (1998) in positing the thesis that the 'changing face of Japanese management' entailed above all a shift in individual expressions of *self-esteem*. Research focussing explicitly on the self-trust concept (in English, at least) appears limited and primarily of a philosophical / epistemological nature (cf. Lehrer, 1997; Foley, 2001). In contrast, the concept does appear in the discourse of popular 'do it like X' management literature (cf. Covey & Merrill, 2006) and **J3** later admitted that this was the source of her use of the concept. However, and as with 'trust', such literature commonly leaves the concept undefined, relying instead on a series of proposed synonyms to get its message across.

Self-trust and control

As with trust, theories of self-trust have been developed and, as with the Yamagishi (2005) model, derive primarily from studies of experimental psychology (cf. Gottfredsen, 2007). There appears to be a lack of empirical studies, and particularly studies relevant to HRM. Highlighting self-trust in future trust and HRM research would impact on conceptual and practical interpretations of the 'trust-control dilemma' explored in chapter three together with the locus of control concept, connecting (as in chapter four) with the established research of developmental psychologists (cf. Erikson, 1969; Albert, 1990). In contexts for employment such people tend to express a single-minded approach to career development (cf. Golman, 1990; Jackson, 2010b): i.e. the attitude commonly expressed by respondents in chapters eight and nine. The profiling of respondents such as **J3** might therefore be adjusted from an initial 'mosaic' as a middle-aged, female, Japanese and English-speaking career-mover

to a respondent whose profile suggests a propensity towards expressions of *self-trust* – however *a priori* or subsequently defined.

Indeed, **J3** appears to offer a perspective that builds self-perceptions of trustworthiness on experience in order to express acts of self-trust in that she appears willing to identify causes for events and decisions and to work actively to own these: echoing Giddens (1991), there is an opportunity to develop research into ‘active self-trust’, perhaps linking it to research into modern career structures, and building on individual case studies such as **J3** and other participants in this study.

9.9 Summary

The teaching of the Buddha that opened the discussion in this chapter suggests that our experience of social reality is ‘a succession of appearances whose source is the accumulation of causes and conditions’. This description mirrors the experience of researching and writing up this study. The causes have been reflected on many times; some of the enduring conditions have been met: a more critical understanding of trust; a more critical understanding of international management research and of the limitations of management models such as the psychological contract; a keener appreciation of researcher bias.

This study has been possible only with the support of sharers in a process of professional development. These include the scholars and colleagues whose comments are acknowledged throughout the text and whose names are listed in *Appendix IV*. Not named are the research respondents whose testimony and contribution – cited and un-cited – form the core of this study and represent the source of its true value as a process of critical learning and development.

APPENDIX I (Q1 survey questionnaire)

Questionnaire page 1 / 2

Please start here:

What do you associate with the word 'trust'? Write down some ideas (in English or any other language) in the following box:

Look at each of the following statements and put a circle around a number according to the extent to which you

- 'strongly agree' (5)
- 'strongly disagree' (1)

If your response is 'neutral' please circle (3).

If you have no opinion or 'don't know', please circle (0).

Note that the phrase '**I tend to..**' is asking you about your *general* attitudes towards trusting other people.

I tend to trust people who talk like me	5	4	3	2	1	0
I tend to trust people who talk a lot	5	4	3	2	1	0
I tend to trust people who don't talk much	5	4	3	2	1	0
I tend to trust people who smile a lot	5	4	3	2	1	0
I tend to trust people who I know will help me when I need help	5	4	3	2	1	0
I tend to trust people who are older than me	5	4	3	2	1	0
I tend to trust people I see frequently	5	4	3	2	1	0
I tend to trust people I speak to frequently	5	4	3	2	1	0

Questionnaire page 2 / 2

I tend to trust people who are honest with me about any mistakes I might make	5	4	3	2	1	0
I tend to trust people I have known for a long time	5	4	3	2	1	0
I tend to trust people in my own family	5	4	3	2	1	0
I tend to trust people who are competent in a job	5	4	3	2	1	0
I tend to trust people who are or have been useful to me in support of my career	5	4	3	2	1	0

Generally speaking,

I believe that most people can be trusted	5	4	3	2	1	0
I believe that it is becoming easier to trust people	5	4	3	2	1	0
I never trust people that I meet for the first time	5	4	3	2	1	0

If possible, please note down in the following box some reasons for the answers you gave to the last three 'Generally speaking' questions:

Finally, some general information about you

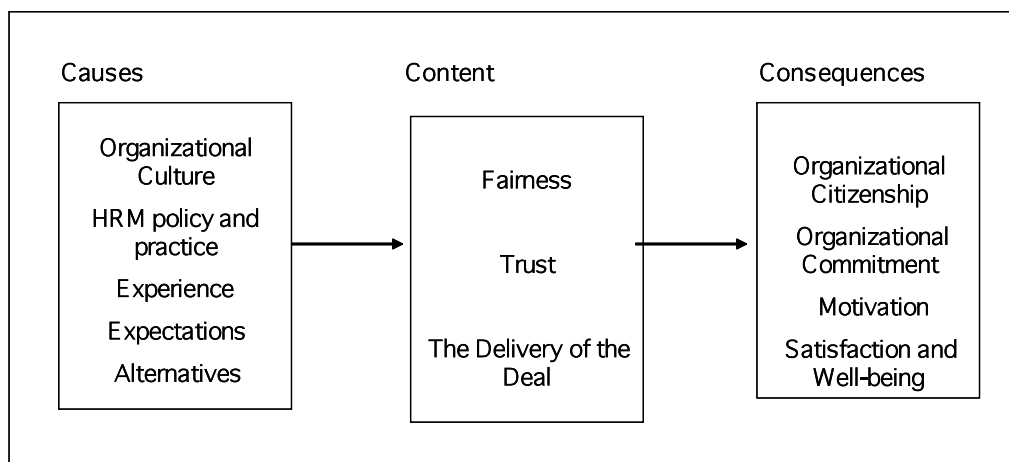
I am: *male* *female* (circle whichever applies)

My age is: _____ My nationality is _____

Remember: all information you have given in this questionnaire will be handled **anonymously and confidentially**: no-one will later be able to identify you or the answers you have given.

APPENDIX II (Coding the psychological contract)

i) The psychological contract used to structure the interviews (*Figure 6 – recap*)



Box 1 (Causes) CAUS

Box 2 (Content) CONT

Box 3 (Conseq') CONQ

CULT

CIT

POL & PRAC

FAIR

COM

EXPER

TRUST

MOT

EXPEC

DEAL

SAT

ALT

ii) Coded items mentioned by interviewees and not included in *Figure 6* (above).

- Organisation (**ORG**) - the outer boundary of the model depicted above?
- Employment Relationship (**REL**) – the space around the three-box model?
- Promise (**PROM**) – what interviewees believe has been promised to them

These three items appear integral to scholar-practitioner interpretations of the psychological contract (cf. Rousseau, 1989, 2010; Conway & Briner, 2007).

iii) Coded items highlighted by interviewees that might, after further systematic enquiry, become the focus for future psychological contract research:

- Independence (**INDEP**); Process (**PROC**); System (**SYST**); Team (**TEAM**)

Drawing on this current study (cf. chapter seven), further research might explore employee experiences of different types of **ORG** and of (Org) **CULT**, perceptions, experiences and expectations of **REL**, and, as emphasised throughout this study, diverse meanings attributed to **TRUST** (cf. chapter nine).

APPENDIX III

(Selected publications / conference papers generated by this study)

Solo publications (selected)

Jackson, K. (2003a) Review of: Matsumoto (2002), available at www.dialogin.com

Jackson, K. (2005) Review of: Rowley & Benson (2004), *Industrial Relations Journal* 36 (4) pp. 343-345

Jackson, K. (2006) Divergence in global HRM: Managing trust and talent in Japan, plenary paper presented to the Delta Academy E-conference on *Divergence in global HRM*, 3-5 March, available at www.dialogin.com

Jackson, K. (2007a) Cross-cultural Management - a module written for the MSc in International Management, Centre for Financial and Management Studies, SOAS - University of London

Jackson, K. (2007b) Dancing with dilemmas: examples and insights from trust research in cross-cultural contexts, paper presented at the 23rd EGOS Colloquium July 5th, Vienna

Jackson, K. (2007c) Review of: Bachmann & Zaheer (2006), available at www.dialogin.com

Jackson, K. (2007d) Images of culture: visual tools for developing cross-cultural competencies, plenary paper for the annual Delta Academy on-line conference on the theme: *Developing cross-cultural competencies*, April 14-17th, available at www.dialogin.com

Jackson, K. (2009) Working with strangers: trust, teamworking and business performance, paper presented at the York Associates / Delta Intercultural Academy conference on *High Performing Teams*, York, September 17th, 2009

Jackson, K. (2010a) Models of HRM in Rowley & Jackson (eds.) pp. 140-6

Jackson, K. (2010b) Talent management in Rowley & Jackson (eds.) pp. 206-213

Collaborations (selected):

Harry, W. & Jackson, K. (2007) Globalisation, the Wave, and the Undertow, *Management Revue* 18 (4) pp. 472-482

Jackson, K. & Tomioka, M. (2004) *The Changing Face of Japanese Management* London: Routledge

Jackson, K. & Schwegler, U. (2005) Comparing approaches towards managing challenges inherent in the empirical research of trust in organisations, paper presented at FINT/EAISM conference on 'Trust within and between Organisations' Amsterdam

Jackson, K. & Debroux, P. (eds.) (2008a) *Innovation in Japan: Special Issue: Asia Pacific Business Review* 14 (3)

Jackson, K. & Debroux, P. (2008b) Innovation in Japan: An Introduction in Jackson & Debroux (eds.) pp. 285-292

Jackson, K. & Debroux, P. (eds.) (2009) *Innovation in Japan: Emerging Patterns, Enduring Myths* London: Routledge

Rowley, C. & Jackson, K. (eds.) (2010) *Human Resources Management: The Key Concepts* London: Routledge

APPENDIX IV

(Sources of *personal communications* cited in this study)

- Dr. Reinhard **Bachmann**, Professor of Strategy, University of Surrey, UK
- Dr. Katinka **Bijlsma-Frankema**, Associate Professor of Organization Theory, VU University, Amsterdam, NL
- Dr. Chris **Brewster**, Professor of Human Resources Management, Henley, University of Reading, UK
- Dr. Karen **Cook**, Ray Lyman Wilbur Professor of Sociology, Stanford University, USA
- Dr. Philippe **Debroux**, Professor of International Management, Soka University, Japan
- Dr. Derek **Condon**, Senior Teaching Fellow, University of Warwick, UK
- Dr. Graham **Dietz**, Durham University Business School, Durham, UK
- Dr. Kurt T. **Dirks**, Bank of America Professor of Managerial Leadership, Olin Business School, Washington University in St. Louis, USA
- Dr. Tony **Dundon**, J. E. Cairns School of Business and Economics, National University of Ireland, Galway
- Dr. David E. **Guest**, Professor of Management, King's College London, UK
- Dr. Wes **Harry**, Bradford University School of Management, Honorary Visiting Research Fellow, Cass Business School, London, UK
- Dr. Guido **Möllering**, Senior Research Associate Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies (MPIfG) Köln, Germany
- Dr. Denise **Skinner**, Professor of Human Resource Management, Coventry University, UK
- Dr. Malcolm **Warner**, Emeritus Professor of Management, Wolfson College, University of Cambridge, UK
- Dr. S. Arzu **Wasti**, Faculty of Management, Sabanci Universitesi, Istanbul, Turkey

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