THE PROFESSIONAL NETWORKING PROCESS: MOTIVATIONS AND BEHAVIOURS OF PARTICIPANTS

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Dedication

The admiration I have for my family is beyond words – please know that your encouragement and love will continue to inspire me.

This thesis is lovingly dedicated to my beautiful family. Firstly, my parents Khalil and Kaokab Marroun, who have been by my side every step of the way and have shaped the person I am today. Dad, thank you for taking the time to understand the basics of research and for always expecting more of me. Mum, thank you for your hugs and kisses, for always making sure I am looking after myself and for spending sleepless nights keeping me company as I worked. I hope when you both reflect back on your lives that this is a proud and happy moment for you. My amazing and beautiful siblings, Sayed, Mariana and Fadi, Alessar and Ali, Souriana and Theo and Antessa and Johnny, this is for you. You all have paved the way for me in this world; you are the people I look up to and want to be like when I grow up. To my precious 14 nieces and nephews, you all keep me young at heart and I look forward to watching each and every one of you fulfil your dreams as you discover this world. To my nephew, godson and mini me Manny, love you to the moon and back baby boy.

I am deeply indebted to my principal supervisor, mentor and friend, who made this success both possible and rewarding. Louise, this thesis is also for you. Thank you for the time you have devoted towards assisting me in this journey. Your advice, guidance and support has helped me grow both as a researcher and person.

Last but certainly not least, to my love, my soulmate in this world, my fiancé Joseph Succar, this is for you. Thank you for your support, motivation, patience and love. Every time you looked into my eyes and said ‘You can do this’ you pushed me one step closer. Now that this is ticked off the list, I cannot wait for us to plan our wedding together.
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To my assistant and beautiful niece, Kristina Khalil, thank you for supporting me, especially towards the end of the process. I sincerely appreciate your efforts in editing my reference list, you are amazing.

I would like to extend a warm thank you to my editor, Adam Finlay. Your ‘just checking in’ and ‘just a quick update’ emails and phone calls definitely kept me calm as I entered my final weeks before submission. Many thanks for your efforts.
Statement of Authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

......................................................

(Signature)
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## Abbreviations

<table>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B2B</td>
<td>Business to business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMP</td>
<td>Industrial Marketing and Purchasing Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDC</td>
<td>User-defined concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WSBC</td>
<td>Western Sydney Business Connection</td>
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Abstract

This research considers relationship formation in a business to business context. In contrast to the sales literature in business marketing, there has been little consideration of how to find business partners. Instead, there has been considerable work about building relationships up to the stage that the first business transaction can occur. However, such work does not consider how initial contacts are made and built in to a preliminary “acquaintance” that can be called upon for future benefits.

In business, first contacts can happen accidently but are often engineered; people seek those who they think can be beneficial, and they think strategically about the value of forming contacts with the people they meet in a range of situations (Ibarra & Hunter 2007). Some business professionals are very proactive about contact formation, and attend events designed to facilitate contact-making. This thesis considers making contacts in the space of deliberate networking events; that is, where professionals gather to meet each other. This is an important area of research because in this setting the focus is given to building these contacts and this provides insight into contact-making in other contexts. To address these issues, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

**Research Question 1:** What patterns of behaviour do professionals display while interacting in purposeful facilitated networking activities and how does this evolve during networking events?

**Research Question 2:** What motivates business professionals to attend networking events? Specifically:

a. What benefits do business professionals seek and achieve from networking?

b. What is the perceived value created from this process?

This study develops an understanding of very early stage networking processes using the literatures of relationship development, social networks and networking, and in particular the literature of environmental psychology. This last literature is of particular value as it allows consideration of the rich interconnections that characterise behaviours at events and provides a framework for the analysis of this.
The research is framed within the critical realist tradition because the researcher’s axiology is that reality is framed as deep, interacting processes, and that it is these interactions which should be the focus of relationship study. To facilitate this approach, the methodology used is multi-method and mostly qualitative. The study consists of three parts: an observation of networking behaviour at events, in-depth interviews with those who attend networking events and a short structured survey with a wider sample of event attendees.

Systematic qualitative observation data was collected at Western Sydney Business Connection (WSBC) events that focused on speakers, workshops and social gatherings located in the Greater Western Sydney region. Observation methods included using photographic survey techniques and audio recordings. These observations focused on patterns of behaviour using macro (e.g. configuration and evolution of groups), micro (e.g. how particular individuals behaved during the event) and single (e.g. experiences of the researcher after immersing herself in the networking event as a participant) level perspectives. The interviews included a discussion of the nature/role/history of the individual’s social and, in particular, professional networks. A portfolio of photographs (taken during the observation phase) was presented during the interview. The survey was used primarily as a verification tool and sought to identify how participants described their networks, the value that they received from engaging in networking events and the process that they undertook prior to, during and after attending a networking event.

The observations highlight that networking behaviour differs according to age and gender, that event attendees are frequently distracted during the networking components of events and that the physical space in which the event is held and the stated purpose of the event further influence behaviour. Effective networking is most likely to be exhibited by older males and within larger spaces where the event is more social in nature. The interviews highlighted the process of networking that occurred in terms of preparation, networking strategies and follow-up behaviours. In particular, the lexicographic analysis of attendee discourse shows that preparation, strategy and follow-up are conceptually linked in their minds, that there is a large range of behaviours that occur at events and that these are largely associated with building contacts. The survey confirms most of the findings from the observation study and in-depth interviews; however, it also emphasises that attendees often are
not conscious of the full range of possibilities that networking can provide them and instead focus on contact-making.

This thesis concludes with a discussion of the kinds of training that can facilitate the building of value for individuals’ networks as well as for their organisations’ network profile. This training includes building skills in interacting and should involve leveraging the value that is embedded in the more experienced members of the organisation; that is, formal and informal mentoring programs that ensure more junior staff learn how to network effectively should be offered.
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

There has been a substantial amount of work into the functioning of business to business (B2B) relationships but while this area has been well researched there has been very little work in specific activities of relationships in their early stages. This includes in particular the very beginning of B2B relationships (i.e. the when, where, how and why contact first occurs and an interaction takes place) and the influence this has on formation of a business contact and a relationship that (perhaps) emerges. In business, first contacts can happen accidently but are often engineered; people seek those that they think can be beneficial and/or they continuously think strategically about the value of forming contacts with the people they meet in a range of situations (Ibarra & Hunter 2007).

A lack of attention to the activities occurring at relationships’ very beginning is surprising. According to complexity theory, path dependency is inevitable in social systems; that is, actions at critical junctures determine the subsequent evolution of systems. This combined with the high sensitivity of complex systems to starting conditions means that that it is likely that relationship evolution very much depends on their very beginnings (Wilkinson & Young 2002). This is important in B2B relationships as the quality of the relationship starting conditions has an impact on the nature of the ongoing relationship that emerges between the organisations and individuals involved in it. One place where there has been work about the beginning of relationships is in the area of entrepreneurship where the processes within the entrepreneurial activities are the focus (Gries & Naudé 2011). However, in the main this deals with a very specific kind of relationship beginning.

This thesis is concerned with B2B relationships’ very beginning at both the individual and organisational level. One way that the very beginning of relationships
happen is through networking. This study looks specifically at the behavioural processes of networking used to initiate professional relationships. By “networking” we mean the deliberate activities or chance encounters by individuals that allow for the initiation, development and ongoing maintenance of network connections (DiMicco et al. 2008; Keenan & Shiri 2009). When the networking process is considered, it is most often considered normatively; that is, focusing on how to network more effectively (e.g. Szeto, Wright & Cheng 2006) rather than considering how people do network and the impact of different networking activities.

There is recognition that a possible way of building professional and organisational networks is to attend events partially or solely intended to provide like-minded people with a forum for meeting and forming advantageous links (e.g. O’Brien 2006). Again, previous work focuses primarily on guiding effective networking at events (e.g. Kuzma, Shanklin & McCally 1992) as opposed to ascertaining micro-level behaviours that attendees demonstrate when preparing to attend an event, when engaging at an event and in their actions after the event. It is the latter, more descriptive nature of networking and its impact that is the focus of this study.

Networking and the relationships that can emerge may not lead to sales but nevertheless can provide value. Part of that value may be associated with furthering one’s professional value and/or by furthering one’s firm’s value. The value of networking is widely recognised in the business world. In the popular and practitioner media the value of networking for personal and professional advancement is much discussed, as is the ways it should be done (e.g. B2B Magazine 2014). This has led to the emergence of an industry that sells services including seminars, workshops and coaching to improve networking skills (e.g. firms such as Strategic Business Network- www.strategicbusinessnetwork.com) as well as firms that build and sell access to “high quality” networks.

The selling of these services more often than not focuses on the relationships’ very beginning, specifically the initial impression. For example, in Forbes, Van Petten (2011) argues that the assessments that are most difficult to overturn are made in the first moments of contact. This echoes throughout academic literature as well as in practitioner literature when it is considering the beginnings of relationships. While there is no consensus as to what drives attraction in first contacts, it is recognised that
overt networking facilitates building a contact base and that this can ultimately provide economic benefit (Garrett 2010). And a common thread through much of this hype, rhetoric and serious discussion is the importance of the very early stages of contact in determining not only whether the relationships will emerge but also their nature.

This research focuses on direct personal contact and the role that it plays in building relationships and networks as distinct from building relationships and networks via networking in a social media context. This is because professionally based, direct personal contacts continue to be more important than social media in developing effective business networks (OFCOM 2008; Young et al. 2008) despite the lack of attention this is presently given in academic research relative to the work being done in online network-building. Internet-based social communication is shown to be often important and credible (Brown, Broderick & Lee 2007; Schiffman & Kanuk 1995). However, the relative importance of and value in making important decisions delivered by online contacts remains less than for those with whom there are interpersonal connections (OFCOM 2008; Young et al. 2008). There is also anecdotal evidence that indicates that personal contacts provide more financial value in business contexts (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010).

Chapter 2 considers the very early stages of relationships via the literatures of business relationships and their development, networking as a means of relationship development and also uses the theories of environmental psychology to frame consideration of the environment of networking. Following this, a study focusing on the motivation, activity and perceived networking value of those who attend networking events is presented. This thesis concludes with a discussion of the implications of these findings for researchers and practitioners and future research.

The remainder of this chapter will cover the research problem and questions that guide this study. Following this, the justification of the research will be provided. Then the research methodology adopted in this study will be introduced. This chapter then concludes by defining the key constructs used in the thesis followed by an outline of the five chapters.
1.2 Research Problem and Research Questions

This study considers non-accidental beginnings, in other words the seeking of business contacts. Also considered are the motives and actions before, during and after managers network with prospective contacts and the value they perceive to gain in doing so. The more specific context of this research is to consider the nature and value when attending organised networking events.

The main research problem in this study is:

How do business professionals engage in the networking process and what are their motivations for so engaging?

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

**Research Question 1**: What patterns of behaviour do professionals display while interacting in purposeful facilitated networking activities and how does this evolve during networking events?

**Research Question 2**: What motivates business professionals to attend networking events? Specifically:

a. What benefits do business professionals seek and achieve from networking?

b. What is the perceived value created from this process?

The research problem and questions identify three key areas of literature that will guide this study. These are network connections, which includes consideration of relationships and people; the networking process; the networking environment and perceived value. This is discussed in detail throughout Chapter 2.
1.3 Justification of Study

Within the three key areas of literature that guide this study there are substantive and important gaps that this study will address. These include:

- For network connections: there is limited attention in the contemporary relationship marketing literature about the very early parts of a relationship process, as already discussed.

- For networking process: little is known about the process of networking because previous work focuses primarily on guiding effective networking at events (e.g. Kuzma, Shanklin & McCally 1992) as opposed to describing the micro-level behaviours that attendees demonstrate when preparing to attend an event, when engaging at an event and in their actions after the event.

- For value: while there has been substantial research within the Industrial Marketing and Purchasing (IMP) Group and elsewhere as to the value that networks provide to firms, a substantial review of the literature does not show any previous work which considers the value gained through networking activities. This is the case for both value gained by business networks because of networking activities and value gained by networking individuals as a result of networking activities.

Each of these is considered in turn below.

1.3.1 The Networking Connections Gap

Literature considering the nature of relationship development does not focus on how initial attachment happens to any great degree. In business marketing, relationships are often conceptualised as commencing with the first transaction and as being built within subsequent transactions (Levitt 1986). Relationship “development” is conceptualised as a process where factors such as trust, satisfaction, social bonds and relational investments impacted on an entity’s development of commitment (e.g. Anderson & Weitz 1992; Wilson & Mummalaneni 1986) within repeat transactions and growing attachment to the trading partner (Jarvis & Wilcox 1977). Development happens after some attachment is formed; however, there is no consideration about how the attachment itself happens.
The much-cited work of Ford (1980) and Dwyer, Schurr and Oh (1987) presents models of relationship development which do include a pre-relationship stage. However, there is limited concern within the models of the more precise nature of these very early parts of relationship process. In these models relationships are conceptualised to develop as they “mature” through time and through continuing transactions – which often increase in scope and/or frequency. The business relationship cycle is usually conceptualised as a series of discrete stages: initiation (the focus here), development, management and termination or institutionalisation. A small amount of subsequent work in B2B has further considered the initiation phase, articulating it in part as a “pre-relationship” stage concerned with identifying and investigating potential suppliers (e.g. Anderson 2001).

Neglect of early stages of relationships may in part be because relationship development models depict low levels of activity, usually conceptualised in terms of infrequent communication, lack of firm or relation profitability, and/or low levels of communication complexity (Anderson 2001; Dwyer, Schurr & Oh 1987). One could speculate that such a lack of activity is difficult to reflect upon and/or describe and therefore may be seen as relatively unimportant – and thus research focus is directed to other areas. Another explanation is that pre-relationship activities are difficult to manage and are therefore often avoided and thus managers cannot reflect upon them. The time frame for exploration of relational partners can be long and in many/most instances the contacts made bear little or no fruit. This makes exploration of the early stage of relationships a less attractive option for academic researchers as most initial contacts do not “flower” into relationships.

1.3.2 The Networking Process Gap

As already mentioned, there is a lack of description of what constitutes networking activities. When the networking process is considered, it is most often considered normatively; that is, focusing on how to network more effectively (e.g. Szeto, Wright & Cheng 2006) rather than considering how people do network. What is needed are descriptions of the micro-level behaviours that attendees demonstrate when preparing to attend an event, when engaging at an event and in their actions after the event. These descriptions are an important initial step in being able to understand the differential outcomes associated with different kinds of networking behaviour.
1.3.3 The Interpersonal Networking Value Gap

While there is a growing literature on the online dynamics of developing and maintaining relationships and of networking of relationships this does not extend to understanding the value that interpersonal networking provides. Much of what has been done is not relevant. There is an abundance of information and research that proposes how best to develop an online profile, how to connect with people online, the behaviour of online networkers, the type of information that can be shared and the value that online connections can provide (Kimball & Rheingold 2000; O’Murchu, Breslin & Decker 2004; Warnakula & Manickam 2010). A review of literature shows that there is little that considers the processes and behaviours of offline, face-to-face networking. A specific context that deserves attention is the formation of interpersonal connections of business professionals as they engage in facilitated networking events. This context has the added value of allowing a concentrated environment for the study of B2B networking. There is little literature that examines the types of behaviours and group dynamics that occur within this kind of social context and whether the more specific nature of the setting impacts on the kinds of value that different networking contexts provide.

1.4 Methodology

This study considers the processes of networking event engagement using a multi-method design. This design is used because both, direct observation of behaviour and networking event participant reflections on that behaviour, are needed to address the research questions. The research is framed within a critical realist stance as this dictates focus upon the interactions between individual behaviours and between behaviours and reflections (Aastrup 2000). Observations and reflections provide (obviously) different information and, in addition to this, value comes from interrelating these two data forms to increase reliability and create synergy of insight (Yin 2009).

While in many instances observation has been undertaken in a structured and quantitative way, in this thesis it is undertaken in a systematic and qualitative way. The qualitative observation data was recorded using notes, real-time recorded descriptions of what was being observed and photographic survey techniques. In
total, eight networking events were attended. During two of the events the researcher was looking at broad and general patterns of behaviour and as such photographs of this nature were captured. In addition, the researcher also attended four other networking events where more focused and targeted photographs were taken, paying particular attention to pre-identified participants. The photographic surveys were conducted for two main reasons. Firstly, taking photographs of attendees allowed the researcher to record observations and capture the interactions of individuals engaging in the networking events. Secondly, these photographs were then subsequently used in the in-depth interviews of selected participants as an elicitation tool. The last two events attended by the researcher involved a complete-participant research design where the researcher attempted to become the networker.

The third component of the multi-method approach involves in-depth interviews. The interviews included a discussion of the nature/role/history of the individual’s social, and in particular, professional networks as well as consideration of the network(s) of his/her organisation. Explicit examples of overlaps between professional and organisational networks and vice versa and assessment of value emerging were sought, as well as discussion of networking processes. A portfolio of photographs (taken during the observation phase) in which either the interview participant is networking or where general networking activity was occurring were then presented during the interview (as suggested by Harper 2002). This process is known as photo elicitation, and assisted participants to recall and share the experiences and interactions that they had during the networking event.

The final phase of the multi-method approach used in this study was the distribution of a short survey. This survey sought to identify how participants described their network, the value that they received from engaging in networking events and the process that they undertook prior to, during and after attending a networking event. This was used primarily as a verification tool.
1.5 Definitions

This is an emerging area of research and as such there are no commonly agreed definitions for many of the terms used. The terms contained in this table include only those used throughout the thesis. The more specific technical terms, for example those used to discuss the analysis, are not included, instead they are defined when used and where necessary. Table 1.1 defines some of the commonly (and often ambiguously used) terms in the thesis.

Table 1.1 Definitions of Common Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business networks</td>
<td>The 'strong ties between the organisations of two or more connected business relationships, in which each exchange relation is between business firms that are conceptualized as collective actors’</td>
<td>Anderson, Håkansson &amp; Johanson 1994, p. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business relationships</td>
<td>Those patterns of interaction and interdependence between two firms, connected and reciprocally committed to each other</td>
<td>Ford, Håkansson &amp; Johanson 1986; Håkansson &amp; Snehota 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental psychology</td>
<td>‘A relatively new area within the field of psychology, it offers an appropriate theoretical background for the investigation of environments. It is concerned with the influences of the environment on psychological processes and behaviours of people in that environment’</td>
<td>Uhrich &amp; Koenigstorfer 2009, p. 326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>The deliberate activities or chance encounters by individuals that allow for the initiation, development and ongoing maintenance of network connections</td>
<td>DiMicco et al. 2008; Keenan &amp; Shiri 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networks</td>
<td>‘A set of connected exchange relationships’</td>
<td>Cook &amp; Emerson, cited in Hedaa &amp; Törnroos 2008, p. 321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social networking</td>
<td>The development of ‘a social network and relationship based on similar interests and views’.</td>
<td>Curran, Graham &amp; Temple 2011, p. 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Network Analysis</td>
<td>Focuses on the structures of networks in terms of who interacts with whom and the nature of the connections between individuals (liking or not and the strength of these ties).</td>
<td>Adar &amp; Re 2007; Fleisher 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social networks</td>
<td>The collections of interpersonal/business relationships</td>
<td>Goduscheit 2007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.6 Thesis Outline

This thesis is organised in the following way:

- Chapter 1: Introduction and background. Chapter 1 introduces the background to the topic, the objectives of the study and the structure of the thesis.
- Chapter 2: Literature Review. Chapter 2 reviews the literature of networks, and their structural properties and characteristics; then the networking process and environment is discussed followed by the value gained from networking. These discussions are guided by the conceptual framework introduced in the chapter.
- Chapter 3: Methodology. Chapter 3 discusses the research methodology, which includes the research paradigm, the research design for both the quantitative and qualitative data including sampling, the research instruments and data analysis techniques, as well as the ethical considerations of the study.
- Chapter 4: Analysis of data. Chapter 4 discusses the ways in which analysis was conducted on the observational data and presents the findings that emerge from such analysis. It also illustrates how the interview data was processed and examined through the use of Leximancer and presents a conceptual and relational analysis of the interview transcripts. There is further discussion on the analysis and results of the survey data. The chapter concludes with the way in which multiple datasets were combined to provide additional insights.
- Chapter 5: Conclusion and discussion. Chapter 5 discusses the results of the data analysis in Chapter 4. It presents the findings of the study, contributions to knowledge and the academic and managerial implications of the results. It also identifies limitations and makes recommendations for further studies.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The introductory chapter (Chapter 1) provided the background of this research and justified the purpose of it. This chapter considers the literature that informs this and focuses on three overlapping areas. It begins with a review of the network literature, and the structural properties and characteristics of networks; then, the networking process is discussed followed by the value gained from networking. For each of these sections the chapter provides a review and integration of the key issues that underlie the research and the major findings on this topic; the main points of view; a critical evaluation of these views; and, where relevant, a general conclusion about the research area including what still needs to be done – that is, the gap that remains in the research that this study will aim to fill.

2.2 Background

At the core of this research are the personal interaction components of business “relating”. Relating is used as a framework via which various literatures are integrated. This has been presented by other authors as at the centre of business relationships and networks (e.g. Wilkinson 2008). Relating is considered using a somewhat different lens in each of the three sections that follow. The first section focuses on networks and their structural properties; this is primarily focused on social psychology. The second section focuses on networking activities; that is, those activities that lead to network connections. Conceptualisation of these activities is primarily positioned in the area of environmental psychology. The third section of this literature review focuses on value. A stream of literature that is of particular relevance in understanding the value that contact-building brings in its own right is that of the social capital.
These perspectives of relating are considered in this chapter as they share an underlying assumption that business relationships are necessary and desirable. Contacts are made and relationships emerge because there is “double search” by interested parties for them (Alderson 1965). The double search is part of the very beginning of the relationship and continues and evolves through the relationship process. One obvious form of double search is networking; the nature and environment of this process is the focus of this study. The value perceived to emerge from these networking activities, including possible contacts and relationships, is a further focus.

Within each component of this framework, multiple strands of literature inform the research, with the nature of relationships and interpersonal business relating at its core. Figure 2.1 presents a schematic of the key components of the literature relevant to this study. The schematic illustrates the interconnected links between key bodies of literature and theories and serves to position each part of the discussion in a broader framework. Although the bodies of literature that are referred to are distinct in some ways, the line connecting them depicts that they share ideas, even if their perspective and vocabulary are different. The figure highlights that the interrelations among the literatures are indeed complex. The connections raised in this figure will be referred to in the following discussion.

Figure 2.1 was developed by reviewing the relevant literatures and identifying the links between them. These links were identified based on direct references within the various literatures to the ideas that previous work indicates are integral; for example, as the figure indicates, the literatures of Trust and Balance Theory are linked. However, the direction of the link is not indicated in the figure (note that in this case Balance Theory informs the literature of Trust to a great degree). The development of the figure was augmented by a sense-making process. This process involved considering the literature holistically, additional links were added where concepts/theories appeared to be obviously related/connected. It is important to note that the literature represented in this figure is not exhaustive but, rather, provides an overview of the different theories and concepts and the interconnections that are explored in the literature that particularly informed this study.
The large coloured nodes positioned on the periphery of the figure represent the three overarching literature streams mentioned and discussed in Chapter 1. They are Network Connection: Relationships and People (orange), Networking Process (blue) and Value (green). These are connected via the figure’s schematic of the theories and concepts that relate to each of the three overarching bodies of literature. These theories and concepts are represented by smaller nodes with colour coded borders to indicate the primary link or strongest connection to the large nodes; that is, smaller nodes outlined in orange are primarily linked to the orange-coloured node of Network Connection: Relationships and People. Emphasis has been placed on including those concepts and literatures that are particularly relevant to studying professional networking.

As the figure illustrates, these nodes are interconnected both within and across the three key bodies of literature. These connections are considered in turn in the following sections. The connections (and overlaps) in literature are represented by lines between the nodes. There are two types of links depicted in the figure: a continuous line represents links explicitly explored within the literature while a
broken line represents links identified through the previously indicated sense-making process (i.e. these are connections that are yet to be explored in the literature).

As is presented in the figure, the large orange-coloured node of Network Connection: Relationships and People (top left-hand corner) is connected to nodes like Social Psychology, Sociology, Business Relationship Cycle, Social Exchange Theory and Trust (please note that the size of the node does not indicate importance). These areas of literature and theories all share a common basis in that people and relationships are a central focus. Positioned at the top right-hand corner of the figure is the large blue node of Networking Process; this node is connected to theories/areas of literature like Behaviour Setting Theory, Motivation and Environmental Psychology. These areas share an emphasis on understanding the ways in which people behave and their reasons for it. The Value node, which is the large green node located in the bottom centre of the figure, connects directly to the area of Social Capital, which focuses on understanding the benefits of developing and maintaining connections and relationships. As is the case with all three large coloured nodes, there are direct links within the figure (denoted by smaller nodes linked to a large node of the same colour); for example, the link between Network Connection: Relationships and People and Social Psychology – as well as indirect links (denoted by smaller nodes linked to large node of a different colour) such as that between Value and Social Exchange Theory.

The figure shows considerable variation in the amount of connection between the literatures that are drawn upon. The figure is organised so that the small nodes that are positioned in the centre of the figure are connected to more nodes than those on the periphery. Greater or lesser connectedness is further considered in the following sections. Throughout, Figure 2.1 provides the theoretical, conceptual and relational summary that guides the discussion in this chapter.

This thesis is about the nature and outcomes associated with networking. What follows focuses on why networks are important to the people that participate in them. As this part of the review indicates, there has been considerable work in these areas. However, the section that follows immediately below highlights that the behavioural processes of networking have not been extensively considered. As indicated in Chapter 1, this is where the substantive contribution of this work lies.
2.3 Network Connections: Relationships and People

The network connection literature broadly addresses the forces that underpin people’s desire and need to be in relationships, including connected relationships. These forces include economic activities; and here, it is important to consider the social and relational contexts formed by participants within which these activities occur (Smith & BarNir 2002). At the heart of the Industrial Marketing and Purchasing (IMP) research tradition is recognition of the centrality of relationships and networks in facilitating business transactions and thus economic performance. More specifically, this foundation work highlights the central role that individual and organisational interactions play in the development of business relationships (e.g. Ford et al. 2002, Håkansson & Snehota 1995; Turnbull, Ford & Cunningham 1996).

This moves away from the notion that transactions between organisations are discrete and independent and towards the idea that interactions are often based around product/service, finance, information and social exchange (Hedaa & Törnroos 2008; Leek, Turnbull & Naudé 2001) and their character depends on relational history. This alternative way of looking at business relationships also brings recognition that such interdependence between organisations can lead to the development of long-term, interconnected networks of relationships. While initial research into the area focused mainly on dyadic relationships, there has been a gradual recognition that these relationships do not exist in a vacuum and an approach that considers the connections between relationships – that is, a network approach – is needed (Hedaa & Törnroos 2008; Leek, Turnbull & Naudé 2001).

2.3.1 Social Networks

Introduced by Barnes (1954), the concept of the social network has evolved. Today, social networks are defined as collections of interpersonal/business relationships. The composition and interrelation of these relationships have important properties. One of the seminal articles on the characteristics of social networks was by James Clyde Mitchell (1978). Mitchell identifies two categories of social network characteristics: (i) morphological characteristics; this relates to the patterns of links in the network (including anchorage, density, reachability and range); and (ii) interactional characteristics, focusing on the nature of those links (including content,
directedness, durability, intensity and frequency) (Goduscheit 2007). This thesis, given the nature of its research, focuses on the interactional characteristics of business and social networks.

**Types of Social Networks**

Social networks play important roles in business. At the most basic level they provide psychological well-being. This is because people are inherently social and need connectedness to others to effectively perform (Asch 1952). There are different types of social networks. Networks are categorised as personal, professional and organisational. These categories are likely to overlap. Personal networks include family, friends and close associates (Zofi & Meltzer 2010). These networks are built through mutual interests, liking and long-term connections. Professional networks include colleagues and peers. They are based on common work interests and tasks, and are used to facilitate one’s knowledge base. They can be internal or external, such as professional network organisations (Zofi & Meltzer 2010). Organisational-level networks play vital roles in facilitating firms’ business interactions with one another (Marroun & Young 2010; Zofi & Meltzer 2010). Often these networks are concerned with who you need to know in another firm in order to meet objectives within a specific time frame (business teams, project groups, committees and councils). These networks are based on power, knowledge and influence (Zofi & Meltzer 2010).

While these three types of networks differ in many respects, including the purpose and the roles of the people within them, some commonalities exist. These have to do with the way people behave within networks and the way networks evolve. For example, sometimes networks emerge naturally – a consequence of dealing with others on a continuing basis – and this can be in a personal, professional or inter-organisational context. In addition, the motives for network participation may be similar. People also deliberately develop and use networks to enhance their professional and economic well-being (often referred to as “networking”) (Brown, Broderick & Lee 2007).

There has been considerable work on these various kinds of networks and on the ways in which networking occurs. However, there is little work that considers the ways in which these various forms of social networks and the networking associated
with building them interrelate and impact on each other. Nor has there been much consideration of the kinds of value that emerge from the interactions of business and personal networks. This research considers these issues and potential synergies of social networking and business network value creation. In particular, this research focuses on the ways in which social relationships and networks assist in building and creating value in business relationships and networks and vice versa.

**Social Network Analysis**

There are many approaches to describing and analysing the properties of various types of networks. There is a large body of literature that uses Social Network Analysis to consider the structures of networks in terms of who interacts with whom, the nature of the connections between individuals (liking or not and the strength of this), as indicated in Figure 2.1 by the links of Theories of Social Networks and Social Psychology nodes to the Social Network Analysis node (Adar & Re 2007; Fleisher 2005). The literature of social and business networks share a common language when describing the structural properties of networks. Both use terminology such as “actors”, “resources”, “activities”, “links”, “centrality”, “density”, “connections”, “reachability” and “distance”. The tools of social network analysis can be usefully applied to understanding elements of network structure and process.

Arguably the key area of difference between the literatures of business networks and social networks is the level of analysis. The business network literature focuses primarily on the business relationships of firms with other firms; there is recognition that a company is a nexus of relationships between the individuals within the organisation as well as the relationships that these individuals have with other customers, suppliers and other organisations (Håkansson & Snehota 1995). These interactions between individuals define the organisation’s network(s) (La Rocca 2009). The literature of social networks focuses on the individuals who are connected and includes analysis of the ways they interact and the factors that drive those interactions. While not widely studied in marketing, the structure of social networks has been the subject of both empirical and theoretical study in the social sciences for over 50 years (Wasserman & Faust 1994; Watts 2004) – partly because of inherent interest in patterns of human interaction, but also because they have
important implications for the spread of disease, behaviour, innovation and knowledge (Newman 2001). These studies provide insights both as to the structural properties of networks and highlight effective methods for the study of them. While traditional social network analysis methods are not the focus of this thesis, some of the ideas from this approach are used to consider the way that networks and ideas about networks are interconnected.

2.3.2 The Social Psychology of Building Relationships and Networks

Theories of social psychology tell us that relationships are needed for physical and emotional well-being; that is, people require not only the security and specialisation that relationships allow but also need cooperative relationships to enable effective cognitive and emotional functioning (Argyle 1991). A wider network of connected social relationships furthers this well-being both by providing informational, contactual and social resources and more generally providing a coping mechanism that provides social support (Brissette, Scheier & Carver 2002). Networks also buffer individuals from stress and alienation by providing psychological security (Cohen & Wills 1985) and social capital (Thompson 2005). Relationships also provide community (discussed in the sociology literature). The links between Social Psychology, Sociology and Social Capital nodes are presented in Figure 2.1 by the lines connecting all three nodes. This complex interplay of individual and social functions that relationships fulfil has long been recognised by early marketing scholars (e.g. Alderson 1965), who also recognised that cooperative relationships have (interacting) social and economic value.

Relationships have become a growing focus in marketing both because of the “birth” of the IMP group’s relational research in the late 1970s and the growth of “relationship marketing” in the 1990s in services (Bendapudi & Berry 1997; Berry 2002), consumer marketing (Gruen 1995) and business marketing (Evans & Laskin 1994; Payne et al. 1998). However, much of this work is concerned with customer retention (Berry 1995), drawing on the earlier work of writers such as Levitt (1986) and Jackson (1985) who argued that keeping (industrial) customers was a – if not the – central task of firms. However, in contrast to social psychology literature, this takes a fairly narrow view of relationship function and focuses most often on the supplier
perspective of business relations rather than considering both parties to the relationship.

This is in marked contrast to the literature of personal relationships, particularly of close relationships, where there is a massive amount of popular and scientific literature that considers the social and biological factors that cause attraction such that the relationships that sometimes follow can be predicted (see Wilkinson, Young & Freytag 2005 for an overview of the biology and psychology literatures that inform this work). There is also a deeper consideration of the customer–supplier interplay in the literature of international business; the consideration of elements of attraction and repulsion in making contact and forming relationships is a central focus in much work that considers psychic distance and its role in facilitating market entry (e.g. Conway & Swift 2000).

In business marketing literature the development of relationships is considered in psychological terms. While relationships are still conceptualised as commencing with the first transaction and as being built within subsequent transactions (Levitt 1986), relationship “development” is conceptualised as a process where factors such as trust, satisfaction, social bonds and relational investments impact on participants’ development of commitment (e.g. Anderson & Weitz 1992; Wilson & Mummilaneni 1986) within repeat transactions and growing attachment to the trading partner (Jarvis & Wilcox 1977). In other words, development happens after some psychological as well as economic attachment has been formed. However, this work generally does not address how the initial attachment happens, other than considering the first transaction as evidencing the potential for attachment.

The idea of initial attachment was first addressed in the much-cited work of Ford (1980) and Dwyer, Schurr and Oh (1987), who presented models of relationship development which include a pre-relationship stage. In these models relationships begin with attraction and exploration and then develop as they “mature” through time and through continuing transactions – which often increase in scope and/or frequency. The business relationship cycle is conceptualised as a series of semi-discrete stages: initiation, development, management and termination or institutionalisation.
A small amount of subsequent work in B2B has further considered the initiation phase (the focus of this research), articulating it in part as a “pre-relationship” stage concerned with identifying and investigating potential suppliers (e.g. Anderson 2001). However, there is in the main limited concern in the contemporary business marketing relationship literature with these very early parts of relationship process. This may in part be because early stages are characterised by low levels of activity; that is, infrequent communication, lack of firm or relation profitability, and/or low levels of communication complexity (Anderson 2001; Dwyer, Schurr & Oh 1987). One could speculate that such a lack of activity is difficult to reflect upon and/or describe and/or may be seen as relatively unimportant by both managers and researchers. An exception can be found in the literature of relational exploration versus exploitation, which clearly differentiates earlier stage possibilities (exploration) and later stage possibilities (exploitation) (Yamakawaa, Yang & Lin 2011). Exploration encompasses such behaviours like the search, risk taking and experimentation of organisations that seek new opportunities through the attainment of knowledge and capabilities (Yamakawaa, Yang & Lin 2011). On the other hand, exploitation is based on the leveraging of ‘existing firm resources and capabilities; the goal is to join existing competencies with complementary assets that exist beyond a firm’s boundary’ (Yamakawaa, Yang & Lin 2011, p. 289).

A possible reason for lack of focus on exploration versus exploitation is that pre-relationship activities are difficult to justify. The time frame for exploration of relational partners is long and in many/most instances the contacts made bear little or no fruit. Exploration is concerned with experimentation of new alternatives: ‘Its returns are uncertain, distant and often negative’ (March 1991, p. 85). There is some work, mostly in the management literature, which has considered the circumstances under which exploration strategies are more likely and what the nature of these strategies might be (e.g. Gupta, Smith & Shalley 2006). Learning, innovating and finding resources are the reasons usually given for exploration (e.g. Rosenkopf & Nerkar 2001). There is less work that more specifically considers the nature of relationship exploration; that is, the activities and strategies concerned with expanding business contacts and/or more generally identifying and evaluating relationship alternatives. In Figure 2.1, the little work in the pre-relationship stage on how relational partners behave and interact is represented by the broken line
connection between the Pre-relationship Stage node and the Behaviour node. This link denotes the limited literature that focuses on the beginning stages of a relationship and the ways in which relational partners behave during this stage.

2.3.3 Social Exchange Theory

Relationships and networks are conceptualised as ongoing social exchange. Derived from the perspectives of economics, psychology and social psychology, social exchange theory (Homans 1958) defines networks as ‘a set of connected exchange relationships’ (Cook & Emerson, cited in Hedaa & Törnroos 2008, p. 321). This theory has been successfully applied to a number of different contexts, including marital stability research, family violence and relationships as well as business markets. The theory proposes that actors (individuals or organisations) are interconnected and through a series of interactions and exchanges links, ties and bonds have the potential to be formed (Hedaa & Törnroos 2008). This theory assists in analysing and understanding social interaction by proposing that social behaviour can be analysed in terms of ongoing exchanges between actors. Figure 2.1 illustrates the connections between the Social Exchange Theory node and Theory of Social Psychology and Behaviour nodes.

Social exchange theory argues that the way in which actors behave depends upon their calculations of benefits versus costs; that is, people compare potential rewards against the risks of developing and maintaining a social relationship:

\[
\text{Behaviour (profits) = Rewards of interaction – costs of interaction}
\]

The rewards of the interactions can include things like financial benefits, recognition, job opportunities or a simple pat on the back, while the risks include costs to the actor which are not only financial but also the time and effort put into the exchange. When the costs outweigh the benefits actors will terminate the relationship. The connection between behaviour and the rewards of interaction is denoted in Figure 2.1 by the link between the Social Exchange Theory node and Value nodes; this link runs directly through the middle of the figure.

Social exchange theory has been used to analyse firm level as well as individual level relations. However, in analysing business relationships, it is argued that it is best to
consider them in the context of the exchange network that surrounds these dyadic relations as opposed to looking at them in isolation (Blankenburg-Holm, Eriksson & Johanson 1996). As indicated, a business network can be defined as having ‘strong ties between the organisations of two or more connected business relationships, in which each exchange relation is between business firms that are conceptualised as collective actors’ (Anderson, Håkansson & Johanson 1994, p. 2). Social exchange theory draws a clear distinction between relations that are positively connected and those that are negatively connected. A business relationship is classified as positively connected when a relationship within the firm’s network supports/complements an exchange in another one of their network connections. This is distinct from a negatively connected relationship where one relation in the firm’s network hinders/competes with the other (Blankenburg-Holm, Eriksson & Johanson 1996; Raesfeld & Kraaijenbrink 2008).

With respect to business relationships, social exchange theory focuses on two important features. The first feature is that a relationship is developed only if the parties involved in the dyadic relationship see it as being of benefit for them or profitable for future exchange. Both parties need to be sufficiently motivated to engage in business as this decision cannot be made unilaterally (Blankenburg-Holm, Eriksson & Johanson 1996).

It was stated that:

For each important business relationship formed, a number of attempts to initiate business interaction are, for various reasons, terminated or never materialize into significant dyadic business relationships. Given the transformation process, the structure of a relationship is at every point in time a result of its history (Blankenburg-Holm, Eriksson & Johanson 1996, p. 1035).

The second feature is that of the informal character of the business relationship. Events like transactions are usually formalised, however, unexpected opportunities are better managed from an informal approach of mutual understanding.
which encompasses past interaction experience and expectations of future exchange (Blankenburg-Holm, Eriksson & Johanson 1996). ‘Thus, cooperation in business relationships is primarily an informal process of coordinated action between two firms’ (Blankenburg-Holm, Eriksson & Johanson 1996, p. 1035).

2.3.4 Business Networks and Relationships

Business relationships sit in networks, the structure of which is difficult to conceptualise. IMP researchers acknowledge that business networks, and in fact networks in general, do not have an inherent centre or strict borders. It is argued that this makes the structures of networks fluid, allowing them to change and evolve over time (Batt & Purchase 2004; Håkansson & Snehota 1995). Ford et al. (2002) argue that:

There is no single, objective network. There is no “correct” or complete description of it. It is not the company’s network. No company owns its. No company manages it, although all try to manage in it. No company is the hub of the network. It has no “centre”, although many companies may believe that they are at the centre (p.4).

This has implications for the portfolio of relationships that businesses (and individuals) have.

The literature of business networks and relationships is a substantial part of Figure 2.1. This literature considers the relational and network properties that provide firms with a competitive advantage. This literature is discussed here for two reasons. First, it is assumed that organisations will seek to form relationships that facilitate this competitive advantage and will urge their members to do so on their behalf. Second, the individuals that constitute the membership of these organisations will seek to initiate professional contacts (which may or may not benefit their organisation) that will enhance their own competitive advantage.
It has been argued that the ability of an organisation to avoid failure and be successful is largely dependent on the business relationships that make up the business network (Mouzas, Henneberg & Naudé 2008). Often, businesses are presented with opportunities that they are unable to explore or exploit without the use of outsourcing, alliances and informal cooperation with contacts (Raesfeld & Kraaijenbrink 2008) and network members are an important source of such opportunities (Freytag & Ritter 2005).

This has been expressed in the IMP literature as ‘no business is an island’ (Håkansson & Snehota 1989, p. 187). For an organisation to achieve their goals they must cooperatively work together with their network partners (Batt & Purchase 2004). It is acknowledged within business marketing literature that business relationships develop over time through a chain of interactions taking place between professional and/or organisational counterparts (Holmlund and Törnroos 1997; Smith, Carroll & Ashford 1995). Such interaction is at least in part for the strategic purpose of developing relationships and networks and is seen as critical for the success of an organisation and its employees (Holmlund & Törnroos 1997; Smith, Carroll & Ashford 1995). Network relationships often span different sectors and include both formal cooperation between employees and firms (Smith, Carroll & Ashford 1995) as well as the informal ties that exist between them (Krackhardt & Hanson 1993).

Of particular relevance to this research is the previous research into the role(s) personal relationships play in B2B networks. This shows that such relationships guide and direct networks and are guided and directed by them (Awazu, 2004; Cross & Prusak 2002; Kraut et al. 1999). Top levels of management have strong interconnections; for example, senior executives are on the same boards, in the same clubs, attended the same universities (Kanter 1994; Ring & Van de Ven 1994). And, managers report that personalisation is a valuable outcome of business relationships, facilitating further business capabilities and improving relationship performance (Young & Wilkinson 1997). Personal relationships have been seen to facilitate business by extending the firm (Wilkinson & Young 2005), thus expanding business opportunities and providing better access to marketing capabilities and better quality marketing intelligence (Powell, Koput & Smith-Doerr 1996; Webster & Morrison 2004).
Mutual trust and commitment are at the core of forging these connections with others, which are recognised as more readily emerging within continuing relationships (Batt & Purchase 2004; Young 2006). This has important flow-on effects as it is trust that guides the extent that information is perceived as credible and acted upon (Denize & Young 2007). Such credibility is particularly important in making high involvement decisions in business (Mohr, Webb & Harris 2001).

### 2.3.5 Trust

Trust is frequently presented as the key to successful business relationships (Young 2006). The literature considering trust in this way is massive and growing. The absence of trust between individuals and/or firms directly hinders the possibility of establishing relationships and building networks in any context (Edelenbos & Klijn 2007). A review of the many descriptions and definitions of this concept has resulted in the identification of three dominant characteristics that lead to the need for trust (Edelenbos & Klijn 2007). The first is vulnerability. Here there is an assumption between actors that opportunistic behaviour will be avoided, which further encourages open and honest interactions (Deakin & Michie 1997; Deakin & Wilkinson 1998; Edelenbos & Klijn 2007). Risk is the second characteristic of trust. Actors will refrain from taking any action if they perceive themselves to be in a risky and ambiguous situation (Chiles & McMackin 1996; Edelenbos & Klijn 2007). The third characteristic of trust is positive expectations (Edelenbos & Klijn 2007). The ability to somewhat anticipate the behaviour of the other actor, whether an individual or firm, encourages the presence of trust (Edelenbos & Klijn 2007; Lane & Bachman 1998).

Trust allows us to align our perceptions of us and our perceptions of others in our (evolving) networks. As seen in Figure 2.1 the node of Trust links quite appropriately to the Behaviour node, in that actors display honest interactions, avoid risky situations and attempt to anticipate the behaviour of others based on their level of trust with relational partners. Relationships evolve over time and temporality is therefore a vital component of relationships (e.g. see the link between Trust and Business Relationship Cycle in Figure 2.1). Holmlund & Törnroos (1997) argue that ‘it takes some time before a sequence of interactions can be labelled an effective
relationship. Both the past and future expectations related to business relationships influence the present state’ (p. 306).

The three characteristics of conditions under which trust arises in relationships and networks further inform this research, as in order to explore the connections made between professionals at social networking events it is important to understand what is required to form continuing effective relationships and network partners for the professional and/or firm.

2.3.6 Balance Theory

Social psychologist Fritz Heider’s (1958) balance theory informs this research by providing a theoretical basis of exploring how networks evolve over time. As perceptions of others change, relationships are ended and/or commenced (i.e. new people become known to an individual and are added to a network), the nature of what is valued from relationships and networks evolves, and the network is rebalanced to accommodate the changes (Young & Wilkinson 2004). In a social networking context, where new relationships are deliberately sought, this process is likely to be particularly prominent.

Not only does trust play a pivotal role in facilitating connections between individuals and/or organisations, trust is also instrumental in the evolution of relationships and networks (Gadde, Huemer & Håkansson 2003) because it is a sentiment made up of a number of emotions (Young 2006). Sentiments and emotions allow us to make sense of and interconnect parts of our social world. Heider’s (1958) balance theory explains the way in which people usually maintain stability in patterns of their cognitions and emotions (referred to generically as the liking and disliking of others as well as their feelings about inanimate items).

The concept of balance has been applied to explanations of the functioning of larger interpersonal groups (e.g. Situngkir & Khanafiah 2004), negotiation processes and relationship development (e.g. Gummmeson 1997), perceptions of groups such as the US Supreme Court (e.g. Pilialoha & Brewer 2006), matchmaking (e.g. Chapdelaine, Kenny & LaFontana 1994), the connection between voters and their political parties (e.g. Ray 1999), bargaining (e.g. Kette 1986), and developing a comprehensive
theory of self-esteem, self-concept, implicit attitudes and stereotyping (e.g. Greenwald et al. 2002).

Balance theory can be usefully applied to understanding the evolution of networks. Heider (1958) was interested in the perceptions of a person, with respect to another person, and an object of mutual interest, which could also be a third person. Heider noted that the patterns of perceived relationships among the three entities could be in one of two states: balanced or imbalanced (Young & Johnston 1999). ‘By balanced state (or situation) is meant a harmonious state, one which entities comprising the situation and feelings about them fit together without stress’ (Heider 1958, p. 180). Imbalanced states produce tension, which may be resolved by changing the relations or by distancing oneself from the situation. In other words, relationship participants – consciously and unconsciously – strive to equilibrate (i.e. evolve) towards balanced states. The concepts of balance and equilibration can be used to explain the evolution in a business network setting (Bairstow & Young 2012).

Balance theory states that connections between entities (individuals or firms) must be either positive or negative for relationships to be considered balanced. There are many factors that are instrumental in facilitating positive connections between relationship partners; they include increased interaction, closeness and shared beliefs (Heider 1958). The same factors also play a role in forming negative linkages; for example, a decreased level of interaction or contact could result in dislike.

2.4 Networking: Process

“Networking” encompasses the deliberate activities or chance encounters by individuals that allow for the initiation, development and ongoing maintenance of network connections (DiMicco et al. 2008; Keenan & Shiri 2009). There are a number of different motivations identified within the literature in an attempt to understand why individuals and firms spend time and resources to engage in networking activities. These motivations include meeting new people, keeping in touch with friends and colleagues, as a form of entertainment, media sharing, campaigning projects and ideas, career advancement, knowledge sharing, managing existing relationships, self-promotion, advertising, marketing and information mining.
(DiMicco et al. 2008). The association between the motivations of actors and the ways in which they engage in the networking process has been explicitly made in Figure 2.1 with a link connecting the Motivation and Behaviour nodes on the right-hand side of the figure.

Social networks emerge both naturally through kinship, school and common acquaintance as well as through deliberate attempts to build social nets by engaging in networking within an online forum and/or face-to-face. When individuals attend events or engage in activities that facilitate a process of networking, it is not only the outcomes of their attendance that is important but in addition the processes that occur within the networking event environment must be considered. Such considerations of the processes that attendees engage in at a networking event have been yet to be addressed within the literature. Understanding these processes provides additional insight into how attendees behave and their reasons for such behaviours. This provides a basis for further investigation as to the effectiveness of such behaviours in building contacts and extended social networks.

It is argued that the scale and context of social networks has fundamentally changed in recent times (Zofi & Meltzer 2010), as well as the character of individual links. With the emergence of widely available electronic technologies and social networking sites, personal and professional networks have grown (Keenan & Shiri 2009). As a result, arguably, the scale of deliberate networking activities has increased enormously (Keenan & Shiri 2009; Kumar, Novak & Tomkins 2006). Conscious participation in networks has increased awareness of their value (for both firms and individuals) and has led to further network activities (Wilkinson & Young 2005) and further network growth.

The processes of networking have been researched in the sphere of social media (e.g. Heller Baird & Parasnis 2011; Trusov, Bucklin & Pauwels 2009), but there has been very limited consideration of it in face-to-face settings. While arguably social media networking is growing in importance and internet-based social communication is perceived as credible and vital (Brown, Broderick & Lee 2007), the relative importance of internet social network contacts remains less than that of close friends and family in making important decisions (OFCOM 2008; Young et al. 2008). And, networks of professionally based direct personal contacts such as work colleagues
are critical in professional development and value creation (OFCOM 2008). Social media contacts are generally perceived as more distant than those maintained through face-to-face contact. This is the case for both personal/social networks and professional organisational ones (Tsai & Ghoshal 1998).

The rationale underpinning the importance of networking, whether via social media or face-to-face, is, as has been discussed in previous sections, embedded in the literatures of psychology and social psychology that highlight the needs that are met by creating and developing connected relationships. As has been discussed, this is also developed in the literature of B2B marketing and in particular in the IMP literature which considers the nature and underpinnings of business relationships. Some authors consider these relationships in terms of the actors being tied together by various socially generated actor bonds and consider the ways in which these bonds have different characteristics and serve different purposes (Andersson & Tuusjärvi 2000). However, there has been very limited work that looks at networking with regard to the psychological interaction of people. Exceptions within the IMP group are Cova (who considers the sociology of consumption) (Cova & Salle 2006) and Young and Johnston (1997) who examine the interpersonal – that is, individual level – sphere of interaction. When IMP and other B2B authors consider networking they mainly focus on the building of personal relationships. For example, IMP cases frequently highlight a critical event being the formation of a personal relationship between two key players in different organisations (Dawson et al. 2014).

In the main, when the networking process is considered, it is most often considered normatively; that is, focusing on how to network more effectively (e.g. Szeto, Wright & Cheng 2006) rather than considering how people actually behave as they network. There is a “results” orientation; that is, effective networking is evidenced by building professional and organisational networks. A way of doing this is to attend business events. In particular, events that are partially or solely intended to provide like-minded people with a forum for meeting and forming advantageous links are seen to provide particular value (e.g. O’Brien 2006). Previous work focuses primarily on goals, such as generating a particular number of contacts or methods of making a good first impression, as ways of guiding effective networking at events (e.g. Kuzma, Shanklin & McCally 1992). However, this fails to address the micro-level behaviours that attendees demonstrate when preparing to attend an event, when
engaging at an event and in their actions after the event, and how these are linked to their networking goals and outcomes. It is these micro processes that provide insight into the more descriptive nature of networking that is the focus of this work.

2.4.1 Online Networking

Online networking is considered here because of its rapid growth and influence underpinning the way people choose to interact and build contacts. It also provides a useful contrast to consideration of face-to-face networking, discussed below.

With the emergence of online networking sites and the popularity with which it has been adopted by consumers and business professionals alike there appears to be an exponential increase in the ability of an individual person or organisation to share their opinions, experiences and recommendations with hundreds – if not thousands – of network partners through “friends” or “followers” (Tombs & McColl-Kennedy 2010).

‘Online social networks are webs of relationships that grow from computer mediated discussions’ (Kimball & Rheingold 2000, p. 1) These webs of relationships grow through conversations between people and assist in bridging the gap that is often caused by geographical distance. These kinds of networks provide opportunity for people both internal and external to an organisation to connect. Kimball and Rheingold (2000) note the importance of online networking sites as a means to not only facilitate connections but also support those network connections made during face-to-face meetings.

The interpersonal connections developed and maintained within online social networks have proven to be a powerful source of influence for the people socialising within the network (Hewitt & Forte 2006; Keenan & Shiri 2009; Stutzman 2006; Subramani & Rajagopalan 2003). Websites that encourage socialising are often designed to allow users to share media, make comments and chat with other users of the site (Keenan & Shiri 2009). Currently many scholars have attempted to assess the sociability value of social networking sites and their ability to facilitate interaction between users (Keenan & Shiri 2009; Preece, Maloney-Krichmar & Abras 2003). Such studies inform this research to some degree - as social media interactions are
likely to be used in conjunction with face-to-face interactions (which are the focus of this research).

Internet-based social communication is shown to be often important and credible (Brown, Broderick & Lee 2007; Schiffman & Kanuk 1995) and continues to grow in importance. “Social networking” has of late become synonymous with the use of social networking sites. Not only is this noted in popular media but also within social networking literature. There is a concern expressed with the literature of social psychology that the wide adoption and excessive use of social networking sites not only opens doors for positives but also has the ability to hinder the connectedness and level of social interaction of people. The fear is that as people are increasingly using social networking sites as an alternative or substitute to traditional face-to-face networking, with this comes the detrimental possibility that the skills needed to hold verbal and non-verbal conversations with another person may be inadvertently lost to the art of online networking.

In contrast, there are studies that argue that online social networking supplements more traditional face-to-face networking. This argument is in line with social network theory in that the more social a person is in a traditional face-to-face context the more social they are likely to be in an online environment (OFCOM 2008). This association between behaviour in an online and face-to-face networking environment is illustrated in Figure 2.1 with links between Behaviour, Online Networking and Face-to-Face Networking nodes. Taking this further, online social networking is suggested to provide assistance to people that may be introverted or too shy to engage in face-to-face networking (Wolfradt & Doll 2001). A study on the association between sociability levels and time spent on social networking sites found that when sociability levels increased so to did the amount of time spent on social networking sites (Australian Psychological Society 2010). This association confirms the idea that behaviour patterns of people as they engage in face-to-face networking is mirrored when they engaged in an online environment. This finding is in line with social network theory in that the communication mode does not significantly alter the behaviour of the networker (Australian Psychological Society 2010).
2.4.2 Personal Interaction (Face-to-Face) Networking

Building and maintaining personal networks is an integral part of our social lives (OFCOM 2008). For many, professional network building is also a frequent and important activity (DiMicco et al. 2008). Examples of activities that facilitate personal networking include social gatherings with family and friends, participation in community work, extracurricular activities and so on. Professional networking activities include socialising with peers or colleagues and attending trade shows, conferences and networking events. These network activities are not completely separate for many individuals.

By no means is business-based networking a new concept. Ancient history shows villages trading via personal interactions in a networked way and city states recognising the value of personal extended networks (Padgett & Ansell 1993). Networking has however become increasingly prominent in mainstream social consciousness. It appears that the emergence of social networking sites and the hype that surrounded this early on has had an effect on the way in which people view and perhaps understand the value of networking (OFCOM 2008). With more networking-savvy people online, this has translated to more interest in engaging at networking events offline (Australian Psychological Society 2010). However, this interest in offline engagement does not necessary mean that participants have the skills and experiences to effectively network in face-to-face contexts. As discussed, effectively engaging in networking events is a skill that is substantively different then the skills and challenges of setting up an online profile and making the right connections etc.

In contrast to the substantial literature that focuses on the online dynamics of developing and maintaining networks, there appears to be a lack of academic research that relates to the processes and behaviours of offline business networking (Scholz, Atzmueller & Stumme 2012). And much of the literature that considers face-to-face networking was published early in this century before online networks and networking became so prominent. This lack of contemporary academic literature is represented in Figure 2.1 by the broken line connection between the Behaviour and Face-to-Face Networking node.
A starting place for consideration of personal interaction may be in the literature that considers networking behaviour at social functions and quasi social functions, because whatever the reasons for networking events they almost inevitably include a social function component. There is considerable literature that examines the types of behaviours and group dynamics that occur within social functions, and these include some of the social and behavioural theories that have already been discussed. Some of the contexts in which face-to-face networking could be productively explored include professional conferences (Barrat et al. 2010), personal selling (Geiger & Turley 2005), work related cocktail parties (Conway, Conwan & Bunting 2001) and trade shows (Sasaka 2012). These have in common, that they have a mixture of social and professional aspects, as do professional networking events.

Here discussion primarily considers the trade show literature because there is more material that is directly relevant to event networking than is the case in the other areas. The focus of the trade show literature has been placed on the effectiveness of exhibitors and the use of trade shows as a marketing communication tool. However, it also considers the value to the attendees. The history of trade shows as platforms for networking dates back to 600 BC and beyond (Sasaka 2012). Today trade shows are used as a platform for organisations to promote their products and demonstrate their value to potential buyers (Fenich 2001; Hu & Hiemstra 1996; Vogt, Roehl & Fesenmaier 1994; Weber 2003) with the opportunity of networking with other buyers as a secondary focus (Tanner, Chonko, & Ponzurick 2001). Most consideration of buyers at trade shows focuses on their individual characteristics. Much of the previous research that includes a buyer focus examines the size of attending companies, the individuals’ position in the firm, the attendee’s expertise and role in the buying center (Bello 1992; Bello & Barczak 1990; Gopalakrishna et al. 1995). The previous relationship of attendees and exhibitors is considered, however the relationship between attendees has not been greatly studied.

The networking component of trade shows is focused on to some degree in the literature of international business (e.g. Evers & Knight 2008). Further literature in international business also considers the peer to peer networking properties of bringing potential exporters into a situation where they can network with one another, build relationships and do business together (Welch et al. 1996; Welch et al. 1998).
The trade show context and the networking event context are similar in that they both occur in a confined space and time and there is further similarity in that event attendees are encouraged/invited to interact with others (face-to-face). A key difference is that trade shows almost inevitably have an industry or market focus which leads to greater homogeneity of people present.

The building of networks is also considered in a personal selling context in that establishing contacts is a central focus (Jackson 1985). As will be highlighted in the findings of the study, reported in Chapter 4, the link in the minds of sales people and their customers between contact building and network building is not a conscious one. It is only recently that the business marketing literature has begun to move beyond the consideration of building relationships via sales call interactions to considering the building of connected set of relationships i.e. networks (Borg and Young 2014).

The following sections present a theoretical framework within which the social and behavioural elements at networking events can be studied.

### 2.4.3 Study of Behaviour Process and Networking

This thesis considers the behavioural process of networking in the framework of behaviour setting theory and its offspring, environmental psychology (Barker 1968). In line with Uhrich and Koenigstorfer (2009), this is a suitable theoretical framework in which to investigate the processes and environment of social interactions – in this case, professional networking events. It is particularly suitable because the focus is on behaviour occurring within ‘a specific context/environment’ (Giuliani & Scopelliti 2009, p. 376). These theories see both the environmental and/or social ecology and behaviour occurring within it as interacting parts of a system. This emerges from Kurt Lewin’s field theory (1951), which focuses on explaining human behaviour by looking at the environment where the behaviour takes place and considering the relationship between a person and their context.

**Behaviour Setting Theory**

Developed by Roger Barker (1968), behaviour setting theory explains the study of behaviour in its natural environment and small-scale social systems. Interestingly,
although this theory has not been widely adopted in mainstream psychology, it has been accepted and implemented by a number of disciplines, including behavioural ecology, social psychology and behaviour studies (Propov & Chompalov 2012). One argument given by psychologist Richard Price (1990) for the lack of acceptance of this theory by the discipline is that being part of ecological psychology this theory does not incorporate motives, personality or emotion, which are the main areas of research and theory in psychology (Propov & Chompalov 2012). Focusing on the relationship between the person and the context that they are in enables this theory to consider real-world behaviour in terms of the structures and patterns that are available to the observer (Skou Petersen 2011). However, this theory is not without controversy. The methodologies associated with the study of human behaviour in this way required moving beyond the tradition of laboratory research, which focused on the artificial control and isolation of behaviour, to studying behaviour ‘in situ’ (real-life situations) ‘with all the complexity of factors that shaped it’ (Propov & Chompalov 2012, p. 19).

The proponents of this theoretical perspective argue that as well as being internally consistent, this theory is unique in that its breath and scope is beyond the standard typology of theories as it encompasses a greater interdisciplinary realm of theory development and application (Propov & Chompalov 2012). While this theory is widely applicable across disciplines, it is important to note that there has yet to be an agreement around what defines an “environment”. It is however recognised that situational variables and behaviour settings are part of the environment (Belk 1975). There are five categorises of situational characteristics which are aligned with the definition of situation:

1. **Physical surroundings** are those features of a situation which are most visible including ‘decor, sounds, aromas, lighting, weather and visible configurations of merchandise’ (Belk 1975, p.159).

2. **Social surroundings** include other people who are also present, who they are, what role they have and the interactions that occur (Belk 1975).

3. **Temporal perspective** can be measured in units such as time of day or season of year. This unit of measurement can also relate to past or future events for the participant in the situation (Belk 1975).
4. *Task definition* relates to the intention of selecting, shopping for or obtaining knowledge about a purchase, whether general or specific (Belk 1975).

5. *Antecedent states* include both momentary moods and conditions. Momentary moods include feelings of ‘acute anxiety, pleasantness, hostility and excitement’ (Belk 1975, p. 159). Momentary conditions include things like tiredness and illness.

These situational variables have been applied to the study of consumer choice behaviour; however, they have not been used as a framework in which to consider the behaviour of professionals within a networking environment. This lack of previous consideration is illustrated in Figure 2.1 by the broken line connection between the Situational Variables and Face-to-Face Networking node.

**Environmental Psychology**

Building on the discussions above, “environment” can be seen to include natural environments, social settings, built environments, informational environments and learning environments (Donovan & Rossiter 1982; Mayo, Pastor & Wapner 1995; Uhrich & Koenigstorfer 2009). Until the 1960s psychologists ignored the effect that physical settings have on predicting and explaining the behaviour of people. However, since then there has been an increasing focus on the area of environmental psychology in addressing the relationships between people and their environment (Bitner 1992). Study contexts include the natural environment and sustainability (Gifford 2007), residential environments (Craik 1973), workplace environments (Mayo, Pastor & Wapner 1995), entertainment environments like sporting events (Uhrich & Koenigstorfer 2009), institutional environments like schools and hospitals (Craik 1973) and retail store environments (Donovan & Rossiter 1982). These findings suggest that physical environment and its atmosphere have an impact on the behaviour of participants. Such findings are consistent with the link in Figure 2.1 between the Behaviour and Environmental Psychology nodes. For example, and not surprisingly, Donovan and Rossiter (1982) found that in a retail environment which had bright lights and upbeat music shoppers were likely to spend more time in a store and interact with sales staff.

The underlying premise in this kind of study is that real-world behaviour has both structure and pattern that can be observed and explained in part in terms of the
setting in which it occurs (Barker 1968). In more contemporary contexts, it is used as part of the theoretical underpinnings in studies of ‘servicescapes’ (Bitner 1992), where service delivery and consumption behaviour have been considered in terms of the ways in which a physical environment is able to influence the behaviour of people in physically complex venues such as hotels, restaurants, banks and hospitals (Bitner 1992). This has been extended in the study of ‘social servicescapes’ (Tombs & McColl-Kennedy 2010), where the influence of individuals on each other is included and this interpersonal influence has been shown to influence the service environment.

**Servicescapes and Social Servicescape**

The ways in which a physical environment is able to influence people’s behaviour has been the focus of a number of business service studies that consider hotels, restaurants, banks and hospitals (Bitner 1992). A typology that considers various forms of the servicescape is presented in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1 Typology of Service Organisations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Service Organisations Based on Who Performs Actions Within the Servicescape</th>
<th>Physical Complexity of the Servicescape</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elaborate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-service (customer only)</td>
<td>Golf Land <em>(miniature golf)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Surf ‘n Splash <em>(aquatic theme park)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal services (both customer and employee)</td>
<td>Hotels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Restaurants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health clinic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Airline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remote service (employee only)</td>
<td>Telephone company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Insurance company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Utility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Many professional services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.1 highlights that networking events can be positioned as an interpersonal service with elaborate physical complexity of the servicescape. This typology requires that consideration be given to the potential effects that the physical environment can have on the nature and quality of the social interaction not only for customers, but also employees (Bitner 1992).

One group of literature that provides potential insight for this research is that of the social servicescape. In social settings it has been shown that individuals stay longer in settings which facilitate high levels of social interaction than those that facilitate low levels of social interaction (Tombs & McColl-Kennedy 2010). The social servicescape is an extension of the services literature conceptualisation of the servicescape (as originally proposed by Bitner 1992). However, the servicescape neglected consideration of the influence of individuals in the service environment, including actors such as the service provider (in the case of this thesis, network event organisers) and other patrons (in this research, other event attendees), but rather focused mainly on the physical aspects of the environment (atmospherics).

The concept of the social servicescape places greater focus on the way people act within an environment and the extent action is influenced by it; this positions the concept more firmly within the area of environmental psychology. With this theory in mind, this study aims to include consideration of the impacts of the physical and social spaces in which networking is occurring. The lack of consideration in relation to social service spaces and the face-to-face networking context is illustrated in Figure 2.1 as a broken line between these two node positioned in the bottom right corner of the figure. As suggested by environmental psychologists, people react to their environment in one of two ways: with either approach or avoidance behaviours (Bitner 1992). Approach behaviours are positive and usually directed at a certain place – for example, a desire to stay, explore, work and affiliate – whereas avoidance behaviours reflect the opposite (Bitner 1992). People tend to approach a service organisation with a goal that may be influenced by the setting they are in (Bitner 1992).

Forgas (1979) considers the influences of social interaction between and among customers and employees suggesting that ‘environmental variables such as
propinquity, seating arrangements, size, and flexibility can define the possibilities and limits of social episodes’ (Bitner 1992, p. 61).

It is important to note that studies of behaviour settings have not included a focus on investigating face-to-face networking. Based on the discussions presented in this section, the behaviour setting framework can be seen to have particular relevance for analysis of behaviour in a networking event setting. At networking events the interactions between participants as well as the physical event space largely creates the event atmosphere, that is the environment in which participants are interacting.

2.5 Value

The concept of “value” has been considered from a multi-disciplinary perspective within academic literature, with each perspective providing a slightly different definition of value. The buyer–seller relationship literature most commonly defines value as an economic exchange focusing largely on ‘… price given and components received’ (Zeithaml 1988, p. 14). However, this definition is given in the context of consumer relationships, whereas B2B value looks at a more multi-dimensional conceptualisation of value, as will be discussed below. This differs from the way in which marketing management literature conceptualises value, in that it places customers (buyers) at the centre (Bowersox, Closs & Stank 2000) and focuses on how firms create value for them. Business management literature considers value from a perspective of maximising competitive advantage. It is based on the organisation using its ‘… ability to perform better than the competition using human, organizational, and physical resources over time’ (Hillman & Keim 2001, p. 127).

It is beyond the scope of the thesis to conduct an in-depth review on the literature of value in business relationships. As has already been noted, this is substantial. Also, as is the case in considerations of value in many/most contexts, the study of value is problematic for a number of reasons.

Firstly, value is idiosyncratic; that is, it is in the eye of the beholder. Thus there are many different kinds of value, arguably as many types as there are relationship/network participants. Secondly, these various types of relationship value have been further differentiated within the literature, resulting in a number of levels
There is also a stream of literature that considers the way the quantity and type of value changes over time (Clements 2009; Mandjak & Durrieu 2000). This time-based approach further highlights that value is a dynamic and complex concept. Table 2.2 presents more examples of this dynamic nature of value across the three levels of episode, relationship and network value.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.2 Dynamic Nature of Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Episode Value</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offering as sum of benefices received by customer in monetary terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offering as result of previous relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offering as a value carrier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offering as a set of economic and non-economic elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offering as relationship benefices or sacrifices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship Value</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value as desired, perceived and judgement aspect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value as economic, strategic and behavioural dimensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value as safety, credibility and security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value as trust for a mutually profitable relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation value as stages of relationship development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation value as mutual goals, non-retrievable investments, adaptations, structural bonds, cooperation and commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation value as direct and indirect functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Network Value</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructive value as resource transferability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructive value as activity complementarily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructive value as actor–relation generalisability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrative value as collaborative closeness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrative value as operational excellence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deleterious value as resource particularity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deleterious value as activity irreconcilability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deleterious value as actor–relation incompatibility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Mandjak & Durrieu 2000)

Overall the table shows that value can be negative or positive in a number of different ways, can be economic and non-economic, and can include elements of relationships and/or activities and/or resources as a source of value. At the episode level value is conceptualised as ‘… what a customer firm gets in exchange for the price it pays’ (Anderson & Narus 1999, p. 6). This type of value is most often
economic and can occur through a number of interactions whereby an exchange takes place. The relationship value level (referred to in Table 2.2) is mostly non-economic and is defined based on a number of different classifications. One such example is Flint, Woodruff and Gardial (1997), who classify relationship value as perceived value (this includes a number of abstract elements, including implicit beliefs that guide behaviour), desired value (this is related to what customers want) and value judgement (this involves an assessment of the value that has occurred) (Flint, Woodruff & Gardial 1997; Mandjak & Durrieu 2000). Much like the relationship level, the network level of value is mainly non-economic in nature. This level of value is based on:

…the perceived attractiveness (or repulsiveness) of a firm as an exchange partner due to its unique set of connected relations with other firms, links to their activities, and ties with their resources


Although the concept of value is perceived differently within and across the many disciplines, they all share a commonality in that there is a focus on exchange (Clements 2009). The following sections review the literature of value within the context of networks, networking and social capital.

2.5.1 Value in Networks and Networking

This section considers the cost/benefit – that is, the value of the exchange – that occurs within networking. This previously has been primarily considered within social exchange theory, as reviewed in Section 2.3.3. However, this literature fails to consider value within the process of exchange but rather focuses on the transaction as a unit of analysis. Value creation is considered as a process in Sections 2.3 and 2.4. There, value is considered, at least implicitly, via the consideration of different types of value that can emerge through operating in networks. Here the focus is more specifically on the value emerging from networking. However, the remainder of this section focuses first on the value of operating in networks.
The kinds of value that networks can and do provide is considered in a number of studies. There is the direct economic value that business relationships and networks provide, but indirect and non-economic value also can emerge through business relationships. Such value includes knowledge sharing (Krackhardt & Hanson 1993), innovation (Smith, Carroll & Ashford 1995), creation of synergies (Batt & Purchase 2004), sharing of resources (Sugarman 2010), strategic alliances (Krackhardt & Hanson 1993), access to markets (Yeung 2005) and source of a sustainable competitive advantage (Smith, Carroll & Ashford 1995).

The literature that focuses on the value of naturally emerging networks, as discussed in Section 2.3.1, argues that the exchange in help and support between actors is one of the main benefits of engaging in these networks (Zofi & Meltzer 2010). The literature that considers deliberate attempts by individuals and/or businesses to build social nets highlights the kinds of value that the building of networks provides, including job search, promotion of products and services, knowledge management and collaboration opportunities (Anderson 2008; DiMicco et al. 2008; Krackhardt & Hanson 1993).

There is also literature that considers the value created within relationships and networks from a commitment perspective (Sharma, Young & Wilkinson 2015). Value is considered as both an outcome of relationship and network participation, and as impetus for commitment. While the former focuses on later stages of relationship development and the benefits this brings, the latter recognises that the value from commitment includes the social contacts that the networks will continue to provide as part of the reason for building commitment with trading partners.

The value emerging from networking is considered in the following section in terms of social capital.

2.5.2 Value in Social Capital

A stream of literature that is of particular relevance in understanding the value that contact-building brings in its own right is that of social capital creation. Relationships provide (and indeed are) social capital (Burt 2005) and arguably as the quantity and quality of relationships increase, so does social capital. The literature is particularly useful for this research because while not the primary focus,
conceptualisations of social capital highlight the value of contactual (as distinct from transactional) activities (e.g. Burt 1992; Burt 1997; Flap 2002; Lin 2002). From the foundational work of marketing onwards, the value of building contacts in preparation for business activities has been considered (McGarry 1951). In addition, social capital is strongly linked to value creation (Tsai & Ghoshal 1998). This is illustrated in Figure 2.1 by the direct connection between the large Value node and the smaller Social Capital node at the bottom of the figure.

The concept of social capital stems from sociology; however, since its introduction it has developed and been applied to a number of different contexts. At the heart of all consideration of social capital is the idea that it is a resource associated with one or more relationships. The following definitions are examples of this:

… the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition (Bourdieu 1985, p. 248).

A resource that actors derive from specific social structures and then use to pursue their interests; it is created by changes in the relationship among actors (Baker 1990, p. 619).

As friends, colleagues, and more general contacts through whom you receive opportunities to use your financial and human capital (Burt 1992, p. 9).

These definitions are similar in that they focus on social capital as being a network resource that can be leveraged. There is an agreement within the literature that social capital is focused on ‘the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures’ (Portes 1998, p. 6).

Social capital development has been considered in terms of the stage of development of the relationship/s in which it exists. This is considered in particular in discussions
of bridging and bonding activities. In relationship initiation, the interaction activities associated with bridging – which involves building social capital via interaction between different social groups, with loose bonds between actors the goal – is particularly relevant. This association is presented in Figure 2.1 with a link between the Bridging node and the Pre-relationship stage node (Eklinder-Frick, Eriksson & Hallén 2011). This is distinct from bonding, where activities which build strong connections within groups are the goal (Putnam 2000). This expands the discussion of the activities of exploration and exploitation (discussed in Section 2.3.2) to consider more explicitly the nature of relational linkages that are the goal at various points in time.

It is argued there is a need to balance the processes of bonding and bridging (Daskalaki 2010). However, the activities of bridging are most often considered in terms of their outcomes. For example, effective patterns of bridging (and to a lesser degree bonding) promote the creative potential in organisations, and facilitate collaboration (Lin et al. 2011). The importance of bridging in terms of contact building is particularly prominent in the literature of building creative potential and strategic advantage through social networks (Slotte-Kock & Coviello 2010).

2.5.3 Individual Networking and Value Creation

The previous review of value literature indicates that there has been a growing focus on how value is created in relational and network contexts and on the nature of that value. However, the focus is on the firm as the unit of analysis, as well as development rather than initiation processes. IMP researchers consider the individual in that they present the business relationship as a process which has, at its heart, connected exchange episodes between groups of actors who are individuals. Value emerges as a result of this effort and investment (i.e. putting money, time, skill and so on into the joint activities of relationship functioning and its management). These investments facilitate organisational learning, adaptation, coordination, commitment and trust building for participants. Through these actions value can be created for the firms involved (Walter, Mueller & Helfert 2000).

However, this work doesn’t much consider the value created for the individuals participating in this process. As has been discussed, the literature of the motivations
that drive interaction focuses on individuals to a greater degree. Individuals’ network-building motivations are seen to include the value gained by meeting new people, keeping in touch with friends and colleagues, as a form of entertainment, media sharing, campaigning projects and ideas, career advancement, knowledge sharing, managing existing relationships, self-promotion, advertising, marketing and information mining (DiMicco et al. 2008; OFCOM 2008).

The literature of the value gained through engaging in online social networking also has a substantively individual focus and provides further insight into individuals’ networking. This literature highlights that people engage in social networking sites for both personal and professional reasons (O’Murchu, Breslin & Decker 2004b). However, the online context and the value it creates is seen as being slightly different than the value gained from face-to-face networking. The particular value gained by engaging in online/social media networking is that it allows people to communicate to a large number of network partners, develop contacts, initiate new business, and build and develop the face-to-face network online.

With the increased use of the online networking phenomenon people have become increasingly motivated to join these networks with a specific goal in mind (O’Murchu, Breslin & Decker 2004a). Engaging in an online social community allows people to gain value from the network that they are a part of, essentially breaking down the barrier of physical distance and allowing people to network with others from different geographical areas (O’Murchu, Breslin & Decker 2004b). These online communities include such platforms as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Instagram. However, as noted, participation in these networking activities does not effectively replace face-to-face interpersonal forms of networking. For this reason, Figure 2.1 includes direct solid links between the literatures of Value and Online Networking and Value and Face-to-face Networking. Although there is limited literature on the latter, there is work that clearly links the two (as will be discussed in the remaining section).

The ways of effectively networking to create individual value have received only limited attention and this has been mostly in the form of promotional material selling services to help individuals to more efficiently interact online so as to build contacts (e.g. Dubois 2010) – although Harvard Business Review has addressed this issue a
number of times (Cross & Thomas 2011; Ibarra & Hunter 2007). There is consideration as to how to build more substantial and effective personal and/or professional networks (i.e. with both recognition that these are not the same) (e.g. Cross & Thomas 2011) and with some material arguing that personal networks provide little professional value (e.g. Ibarra & Hunter 2007) versus other material which argues that these networks overlap to a considerable degree and that personal networks do provide professional value (e.g. Stamp 2013); that is, that effective personal networks fertilise professional networks. And there is recognition that one’s networks can improve job performance via being leveraged to provide value to one’s employer (Rajagopal et al. 2012).

However, this material remains largely within the practitioner domain, with little current scientific study on the processes of networking that actually occur, their relative effectiveness in building personal and professional networks and the ways in which these are used by their members. A contemporary exception is Rajagopal et al. (2012) who considers professional networking for creating a learning network. In the more distant past there was research that considered the value of personal networks for women (e.g. Eckert 1990; Ibarra 1993) and their uses in particular contexts such as teaching and health care (e.g. Hitchcock et al. 1995). However, this work has not continued and or been extended to any great degree.

2.6 Summary

It has been demonstrated here that there are many overlapping components to the literature that informs the processes and impact of interpersonal networking. Overall this literature highlights the need for relationships, and the substantial motivations in seeking those relationships, which include a range of different kinds of value. Also indicated is that the processes and contexts of networking can potentially influence the effectiveness of such networking and thus the scale and nature of the value that can emerge. The following chapters report the design, method, analysis and findings of this study that considers the more specific nature of networking behaviour, the reasons for networking and the value that emerges from it.
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the major aspects of the research methodology to be applied in order to address the following research questions.

**Research Question 1:** What patterns of behaviour do professionals display while interacting in purposeful facilitated networking activities and how does this evolve during networking events?

**Research Question 2:** What motivates business professionals to attend networking events? Specifically:

a. What benefits do business professionals seek and achieve from networking?

b. What is the perceived value created from this process?

This chapter consists of nine major sections. It begins with the choice and justification of the critical realist paradigm (Section 3.2). This is followed by an overview of the multi-method design for this study (Section 3.3), identification of the research context (Section 3.4), a discussion of the research design protocols considered and implemented in this study (Sections 3.5-39) and concludes with the ethical considerations (Section 10).

3.2 Research Paradigm

Some writers (e.g. Berry & Otley 2004; Creswell 2009; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009; Neuman 2011) emphasise that it is important to initially question the research paradigm to be applied in conducting research because the ways one frames and understands social phenomena substantially influences how one undertakes a social
study. The paradigm from which I approach this research is that of critical realism. It is important to identify this because the paradigm does indeed drive the articulation of the research problem and underlying assumptions of the research. Framing everything in this context guides everything one does, because a paradigm is a “worldview” or a set of assumptions about how things work. Rossman and Rallis (2012, p. 35) define paradigm as ‘shared understandings of reality’. Chalmers (1982, p. 91) points out that a paradigm has five components:

1. Explicitly stated laws and theoretical assumptions.
2. Standard ways of applying the fundamental laws to a variety of situations.
3. Instrumentation and instrumental techniques that bring the laws of the paradigm to bear on the real world.
4. General metaphysical principles that guide work within the paradigm.
5. General methodological prescriptions about how to conduct work within the paradigm.

Although philosophical backgrounds usually remain implicit in most research, they affect the practice of research. Today, in the social sciences, there are several competing paradigms. Table 3.1 provides a comparison of the fundamental beliefs between the research paradigms in social sciences and clearly positions the critical realism approach.

As Table 3.1 indicates, critical realism is entirely appropriate for this research, as it attempts to understand people’s behaviours and motivations as they engage within the networking process. The realist paradigm is based on the belief that our understanding of reality is flawed and the only reality we know comes from our own perspective (Easton 2010). Both qualitative and quantitative methods are used within a realist approach, with an emphasis on emergent knowledge (Ryan et al. 2012). This is achieved by conducting research (i.e. observations and interviews) in a natural setting.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fundamental Beliefs</th>
<th>Research Paradigms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positivism (Naïve realism)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ontology: the position on the nature of reality</strong></td>
<td>External, objective and independent of social actors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Epistemology: the view on what constitutes acceptable knowledge</strong></td>
<td>Only observable phenomena can provide credible data, facts. Focus on causality and law-like generalisations, reducing phenomena to simplest elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Axiology: the role of values in research and the researcher’s stance</strong></td>
<td>Value-free and etic; Research is undertaken in a value-free way; the researcher is independent of the data and maintains an objective stance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research methodology: the model behind the research process</strong></td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, p. 119)
The proposed research asserts that the processes of networking event engagement and its value for the individual and their organisation need to be considered, and the critical realist framework allows for this consideration to take place (Aastrup 2000). Easton (2010) suggests that:

While critical realism is a relatively new orientation it is being taken up in many disciplines including economics (Lawson 1997), sociology (Sayer 2000; Layder 1990), linguistics (Nellhaus 1998), religious studies (Robbins 1999), history (Steinmetz 1998), psychiatry (Hanley 1995), social work (Houston 2001) and management (Ackroyd & Fleetwood 2004) (p. 119).

Critical realism has appeared in many contributions within the network approach. It is used to argue for and inform the use of case studies (e.g. Harrison & Easton, 1998) as well as in the search for underlying mechanisms (e.g. Harrison & Easton, 1999). It is also used widely by case study researchers who recognise the need to utilise methods that allow investigation of the rich interdependencies of business networks. This is in line with discussions of case study methodology which direct researchers to investigate interdependency; for example, discussions of the use of abduction by Dubois and Gadde (2002).

This research is a case study of a particular kind of networking event and the people that attend such events.

It was stated that:

Case study research is, probably, the most popular research method used by industrial marketing researchers. This may be, in part, because of the nature of the subject. The main units of analysis are organisations and relationships, which are difficult to access, and complex in structure in comparison with, for example, consumer markets (Easton 2010, p. 118).
3.3 Multi-method Design Overview

In order to achieve insights into professional networking, both reflective and behavioural data is required. In studying networking behaviour, it is important to understand the behaviour and reasons for it as per the research questions. This requires a multi-method data collection approach. That is, in addition to relationship/networking histories and vignettes, observation of networking behaviour and its consequences are needed. There are several reasons for the use of this multi-method approach: the two forms of data provide different information and, in addition, this value comes from interrelating the two data forms to increase reliability and create synergy of insight (Yin 2009).

Qualitative research produces descriptive data that describes human actions and relies on interpretive methods by the researcher (Neuman, 2006). The meaning of behaviour observed and statements made are dependent on the context in which they occur. Qualitative methodology tends to be less structured than quantitative methods and this presents problems for comparison. To some degree this is overcome by including verification of qualitative findings using quantitative data and in addition quantitative findings can be more effectively interpreted when considered in conjunction with qualitative results.

The first component of the multi-method approach used in this study was observations. In total, eight networking events were attended during which systematic qualitative observation data was recorded using photographic survey techniques and audio recordings. The second component was in-depth interviews. The interviews included a discussion of the nature/role/history of the individual’s social and, in particular, professional networks as well as consideration of the network(s) of his/her organisation. Explicit examples of overlaps between professional and organisational networks and vice versa and assessment of value emerging were sought as well as discussion of networking processes. A portfolio of photographs (taken during the observation phase) in which either the interview participant is networking or where general networking activity was occurring were then presented during the interview (as suggested by Harper 2002). This process is known as photo elicitation, and assisted participants to recall and share the experiences and interactions that they had during the networking event. The final
phase of the multi-method approach involved the distribution of a short survey. This survey sought to identify how participants described their network, the value that they received from engaging in networking events and the process that they undertook prior to, during and after attending a networking event.

3.4 Research Context

The source of the data is the Western Sydney Business Connection (WSBC), which agreed to participate in the research. WSBC is an independent not-for-profit organisation established in 1985 with a focus on (mostly small-to-medium enterprise) B2B networking and development (WSBC 2010). WSBC represents a cross-section of businesses in the Greater Western Sydney region and is totally self-funded by membership, sponsorship and its many business events, all of which allow it to be totally member focused (WSBC 2010). The group’s role ranges from business networking, the promotion of and investment attraction for Western Sydney, developing young business leaders, to growing business opportunities with key Asian countries (WSBC 2010). WSBC events typically attract between 40 and 70 attendees; however, the larger type events often host up to 250 attendees (WSBC 2010). Members are made up of leading CEOs, managing directors, general managers, and local, state and federal government representatives. The attendees of the events are to a larger degree members of the WSBC but non-members are also welcome.

The WSBC provides opportunities for event attendees to expand their networks, build their company profiles, promote their business and engage with influential business leaders. As WSBC facilitates networking between professionals, through the organisation and facilitation of networking events, it provides an appropriate context for this study.

3.5 Pilot Study

A pilot study of the observation and interview data collection method was conducted to ascertain the effectiveness of the data in answering the proposed research questions.
3.5.1 Pilot Study: Interview

Preliminary research was undertaken to inform the research design involved in investigating the nature of networking behaviour. Interviews were conducted with three people with considerable knowledge of WSBC. Informants included a past president of WSBC, a current board member and a committee chairperson.

These interviews indicated that there are a wide range of motives for attending networking events and that in part motivation depends on the nature of the event. Some events are more concerned with facilitating professional networking – that is, assisting firms to make contacts with one another – while others focus on personal network development. Irrespective of the nature of the event, the process of facilitating networking is fairly similar; that is, setting up events so there is a critical mass of potential contacts (quantity versus quality). These informants further highlighted that people attending events often have pre-existing networking strategies and there appears to be a wide range of these; examples given included pre-identifying people that you want to talk to and planning a pattern of movement through an event that will allow the meeting of as many of these people as possible.

The interviews confirmed the need for the research design to include observation of networking activities. Including observation as part of a multi-method design was considered preferable to solely relying on reporting by participants because all three informants indicated that not all networking behaviour is consciously planned, nor are the responses by others to networking approaches necessarily understood. In addition, by attending these functions, it was anticipated that there would be an opportunity to introduce the study to a large proportion of attendees and invite them to participate in the in-depth interview and/or complete a short survey to obtain some overarching data.

3.5.2 Background and Pilot Study: Observation and Photographic Survey

Subsequent to receiving approval by the ethics committee to pilot the observation and photographic survey techniques, attendance at three networking events was organised. The first two events were the Connection X Speed Networking Event (27/07/10) and WSBC: State of The Region Address Kristina Keneally (04/08/10). No photographs were taken at these events as the purpose for attending was to get a
feel for what kind of people attended these professional networking events, how these events were structured and how attendees interacted during the allocated networking time. Photography during these two events could have proven useful in testing the method but may have been a distraction from these goals. Attending these events was preparation for my attendance at the third event, where method testing was undertaken.

The third pre-test event was the WSBC: David Gallop Event (23/09/10), where photographs of attendees interacting were captured (with their informed consent, which was taken in the form of an email to all attendees; see Appendix 1). The photographs were not intended to be used in the research/writing of this thesis but rather to test/assess the type of interactions that could be captured using photographs and further allow for the refinement of the data collection process. At this event, additional photographs were taken by WSBC’s professional photographer. These were assessed as a possible data source. However, the issue of attendees posing and non-systematic photography diminished the value of the photographs as a means of capturing and eliciting reflections by participants. Furthermore, not all events hosted by the WSBC are professionally photographed.

A number of issues were encountered during the pre-test at this event which necessitated some adjustment to the method. Specifically, the quality of the researcher’s photographs was substandard, choice of subjects was disconnected, there was limited ability to understand behaviour, and there was also limited ability to make observational notes. Modifications to the method design involved investing in the purchase of a semi-professional camera to improve the quality of the photographs and the speed of the camera shots. Making the decision to take focused photographs of pre-identified participants using time stamps allowed the researcher to capture relevant data regarding patterns of interaction and movement during the event. Opting to digitally record observations while simultaneously taking photographs ensured that the researcher could better manage the data collection process. These pilot tests shaped the subsequent data collection in this study.
3.6 Observation

This section contains consideration of various observational methods and their effectiveness. The consideration of issues associated with observation as presented here is fairly extended. This is necessary because there is considerably less information available as to the process of qualitative observation and effective data capture of observations. Therefore, a review and integration of observation methods and its issues follows. Subsequently, the specifics of the observation study that form a part of the research are presented.

3.6.1 Nature and Role of Observation

While there has been a reasonable number of observation studies of consumers’ buying (e.g. Spanjaard, Young & Freeman 2014) and consuming (e.g. Belk, Wallendorf & Sherry 1989), there has been relatively little observation-focused study of B2B participants as they function in marketing relationships and networks. However, as already noted, observation is used in case study research, usually informally, particularly where the researcher is a participant in the organisation (Gioia & Kumar 1991). But the primary focus in case studies in business marketing is most often on interview data and/or secondary information. When observation is a significant contributor of information to the case, the focus is often on the larger events that were observed rather than the micro behaviours of those participating within those events (e.g. Bairstow & Young 2012).

However, there has been recent growth in the use of systematic observation methods in social research, in part due to the growing availability and popularity of videography and ethnographic designs (Murthy 2008). This augments the continuing role that (often ad hoc) observation plays in business research; for example, the observations of researchers during interviews in constructing case studies (Yin 2009). Growing use of observation may also emerge from a continuing move by researchers in marketing from a scientific stance that is strictly positivistic towards realism and relativism as they seek meaning as well as or instead of generalisation. Arguably, structured observation provides only limited insights; for example, counts and/or duration of particular behaviours are often the focus of studies of shopping behaviour. However, use of more qualitative styles of observation, often as part of
ethnographic study to seek deeper levels of understanding, is a longstanding tradition in other areas of social science (e.g. Ghemawat & Khanna 1998).

3.6.2 Advantages and Limitations of Observation Research

In B2B case studies, observations are almost inevitably ad hoc rather than systematic, and are generally uni-method. This means that observations of different kinds of behaviour are undertaken but the observational perspective (i.e. the way things are observed) remains the same. For example, a researcher might be a continuing participant–observer in a firm. They therefore interpret events from that role and these perceptions are different and less varied than they would be if the observer also observed from the perspective of being an outsider or if they were operating in multiple roles within the firm. In general, there is no consideration of the (inevitable) biases present as a result of the researcher’s perspectives and how these impact the interpretation of what has been observed. (This thesis does not argue that biases must be eliminated, but rather that they must be recognised and their impact on the interpretation, of that which is observed, considered (Golafshani 2003)) This is considered in greater detail in the following section.

Observation can be used to capture many types of data. Examples of marketing phenomena that can be systematically observed include:

- Physical actions, such as shopping patterns
- Verbal behaviour, such as conversations
- Expressive behaviour, such as tone of voice
- Spatial relations and locations, such as traffic patterns
- Temporal patterns, such as amount of time spent making a decision
- Physical objects, such as the amount of newspapers recycled
- Verbal and pictorial records, such as the content of reports or advertisements.
  (Zikmund et al. 2013)

Advantages of observation focus on its directness – that is, it allows the researcher to directly access the phenomena they are interested in (Atkinson & Hammersley 1994) – and from these observations, process, evolution and causality can often be inferred (Powell & Connaway 2004). This is in contrast to methods such as interviews which
filter the phenomena; that is, the researcher relies on self-reports or second- and third-hand reports of behaviour where informants are reporting their observations and interpretations as to causality. These are bound to be less accurate as informants will, intentionally or not, imperfectly report their own behaviour or observations and researchers will have difficulty ascertaining the degree and nature of such inaccuracy in second- and third-hand reports (Piekkari, Plakoyiannaki & Welch 2010).

Other advantages of observations include the flexible and complementary nature of this method. Observations can take diverse forms, from informal and unstructured approaches through to tightly structured, standardised procedures, and can produce associated diverse types of data (Atkinson & Hammersley 1994). Another strength of observation is that it can effectively complement other approaches and thus enhance the quality of evidence available to the researcher.

However, there are many phenomena that cannot be observed. Much social research is concerned with what people think, instead of or as well as, what they do. Or, research is concerned with specific and fairly infrequent behaviour, where reports are needed because the behaviour is unlikely to be observed. As well as reporting behaviour, humans reflect on reasons for behaviour and can communicate these reflections as well as their attitudes, opinions and feelings (Powell & Connaway 2004). And, these reflections are often directed by the researcher/interviewer towards particular issues of interest. These insights are not available via observation.

Other limitations of observation are its time-intensity and complexity. Substantial resources are involved in collecting and analysing observational data. While today’s (and tomorrow’s) technology can simplify the recording of observations (e.g. cameras and videoing), there are substantial sense-making and translation processes (i.e. the seen behaviour has to be translated into words describing what was seen) involved in observation (Wilkinson & Young 2004). This makes analysis of observation data, with its extra layers of interpretation, arguably more complex than other analysis forms (Baker 2006).

In addition, there are observer biases and effects that can compromise the quality of observation and its interpretation. An observer may record what they expected or wanted to see as opposed to what was actually occurring. Arguably this is potentially
a more significant problem in observation than in other research methods because of
the previously mentioned need to translate what is seen into words (Baker 2006) and
the possibly greater translation involved in this process. In addition, the presence of
an observer can influence the behaviour of those being observed. Here an obvious
trade-off is made – the closer the researcher gets to what is researched the more
insight they are likely to gain – but the probability of affecting or changing what is
being observed is heightened.

3.6.3 The Role of the Observer: The Issue of Closeness–Distance

An integral part of the design of an observation study is the observing “role” the
researcher will play. The observer’s role has been defined as ‘the characteristic
posture[s] researchers assume in their relationship with the people whom they are
studying’ (Chatman 1984, p. 429). The role assumed has substantial implications, as
each role brings with it costs and benefits. These are summarised in Table 3.2, within
a typology of five observer roles. The table indicates that the different roles – non-
participant, complete observer, observer as participant, participant as observer and
complete participant – bring advantages and disadvantages. These are the previously
mentioned trade-offs of closeness versus distance between the observer and the
observed. For example, the non-participant is most distant – both geographically and
psychically – which ensures they do not influence the observations but at a probable
cost of not being able to closely observe; that is, accuracy and/or detail are affected.

The degree to which the observer is physically and psychologically close to or
distant from the observation will impact upon their interpretation of what is
observed. Implicit in the typology of Table 3.2 is a trade-off between the rigour
associated with objectivity that comes with greater distance and the understanding
that comes from greater closeness (Baker 2006). The epistemological stance of the
researcher will be a significant factor in making decisions about this inevitable trade-
off in research generally and for observations in particular. Realists seek to maximise
both understanding and objectivity while relativists are prepared to “trade”
objectivity for understanding. The advantages and disadvantages need to be judged
contextually. As Baker (2006) put it, the optimal observer’s role depends on the
nature of the problem being studied, the subject’s willingness to be studied and the
researcher’s prior knowledge of the subject’s world. However, this implies that
research should be designed using a single observer’s role. Another possibility is to have multiple observers and/or observer roles to make possible different trade-offs of closeness–distance.

### Table 3.2  Role of the Observer in the Observation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation Roles</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Advantage</th>
<th>Disadvantage</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-participant</td>
<td>This role involves no level of involvement with insiders. The researcher is not present on the scene but rather can “observe” from an entirely different environment</td>
<td>It is a non-intrusive role used in the observation method</td>
<td>It does not allow for any in-depth understanding of people’s behaviour in their own world</td>
<td>Spradley 1980, Baker 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete Observer</td>
<td>In this role, the researcher is present on the scene but does not participate or interact with insiders to any great extent. Her/his only role is to listen and observe</td>
<td>Detachment allows the researcher to be unobtrusive and completely disengaged from the group while taking measures to ensure that they do not influence or interrupt the insiders</td>
<td>Ironically, the benefit of detachment could actually hinder the researcher’s ability to capture any significant exchanges of information between insiders</td>
<td>Gold 1958, Adler &amp; Adler 1994, Gorman &amp; Clayton 2005, Baker 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observer as Participant</td>
<td>The researcher who adopts this role advances very slightly in her/his involvement with the insiders. While still mostly involved in observing, she/he may conduct short interviews</td>
<td>First, insiders may be more willing to talk to “attentive strangers” than they would be to talk to people with whom they are more familiar. Second, there is less “temptation either for the observer to go native or for the natives to try to include him permanently in their lives”</td>
<td>Brief encounters with insiders limit “opportunities for gaining knowledge of total situations”. Gold saw this role as a source of frustration to the researcher who “cannot take time to master” the insiders’ “universes of discourse”</td>
<td>Pearsall 1970, Gold 1958, Baker 2006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 These descriptions and references have been sourced from Baker (2006, p.173-177), who has done a comprehensive review of observation methods literature.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation Roles</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Advantage</th>
<th>Disadvantage</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant as Observer</strong></td>
<td>It is in this role that the researcher becomes more involved with the insiders’ central activities but still does not fully commit to “members’ values and goals”</td>
<td>The researcher may develop relationships with the insiders, such that they become “friends”. Pearsall saw this relationship as beneficial because, as friends, the insiders can “instruct the investigator in the intricacies of their personal and social worlds”</td>
<td>Gold (1958), on the other hand, viewed this relationship as more problematic. First, he felt that the insider may identify too much with the researcher to continue in the role of informant and may become, instead, “too much of an observer”. Second, the researcher may “over identify” with the insider, lose objectivity, and “go native,” thus jeopardising her/his role as a researcher/observer.</td>
<td>Gold 1958 Spradley 1980 Adler &amp; Adler 1994 Baker 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Complete Participant</strong></td>
<td>The ultimate level of involvement as the researcher goes native and studies a group in which she/he is already a member. Researchers act as members, not researchers, so that they do not unnaturally “alter the flow of the interaction”</td>
<td>Ideal for obtaining a very good understanding of the insiders</td>
<td>Problematic for the researcher who may become so self-conscious “about revealing his true self” that she/he becomes “handicapped when attempting to perform convincingly in the pretended role</td>
<td>Gold 1958 Spradley 1980 Adler &amp; Adler 1994 Baker 2006</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Figure 3.1 adds an additional dimension to the consideration of closeness–distance, adding to the degree of participation and the degree of visibility. The addition of visibility is useful because, as presented in Figure 3.1, it highlights that “observation” is present in many kinds of research. In addition, including visibility makes observation explicitly two-way; that is, that the researcher is being observed as well as observing and both can vary. And, in contrast to other writers who espouse
maximum unobtrusiveness (e.g. Bouchard 1976), this conceptualisation indicates that what is optimal visibility is variable. In some cases, visibility can be advantageous and in others not so. Increasingly observing people without them knowing they are being observed is considered to be unethical.

**Figure 3.1 Two Dimensions in Participation–Observation**

The need to ascertain the appropriate relationship between the observer and the observed is of increasing relevance. Traditionally the focus has been on the different amounts and kinds of value for the researcher that is obtained from different degrees of closeness–distance. Increasingly, focus is instead on the appropriate relationship between researchers and those they research. This is often considered in terms of the value and costs to the researched individuals, recognising that closeness–distance does impact upon the observed (Mitchell & Irvine 2008). Research in psychology and management, in particular in feminist theory, often considers one or both forms of distance in terms of power and influence (e.g. Presser 2005) and also highlights the considerable impact that closeness–distance has upon people’s well-being and behaviour. This is reflected in increasing concerns about research ethics and associated issues of consent. Many of the changes in ethical standards in the past few decades can be attributed to changes in norms as to what constitutes an acceptable distance between the researcher and the researched. What is considered an invasion
of privacy has evolved; there is now a sense that the concentrated observation of others without (prior) consent is generally unacceptable (Buchanan & Bryman 2007).

There are other aspects to this issue, for example whether it is acceptable to include observation of research participants in situations where there is consent for an interview but none for observation of their behaviour while being interviewed. These evolving norms are having a substantial impact on research design and present challenges for researchers. One way of overcoming the distance that the wider community (and ethics committees) increasingly seek to impose on researchers is via use of the already mentioned multiple observational roles and multiple methods. Each perspective and type of observation provides different, potential insights which may be individually limited but which collectively can be powerful. As more insights are possible, the pressure to get close(r) to the observed with a particular form of observation may be lessened. Instead the accumulation and/or systematic combining of different methods can facilitate understanding which brings the researcher closer (via greater understanding of them) to his/her research participants (Dubois & Gadde 2002). The remainder of this section considers multiple methods of observation and the effectiveness of these, especially when combined with each other and/or other methods of data capture.

3.6.4 Multi-method Observation

The possibilities for systematic multi-method observation are illustrated via a description of the methods used for this study of networking. The research design has at its centre a number of forms of observation which include use of multiple observation methods, varying observation perspectives and multiple observational roles. Observation was further enhanced via the development of a number of protocols to ensure effective observational techniques and comprehensive recording of the broad nature of the observational space.

This study is conducted using a process-based framework, that is, where the stages within the networking process frame the research design. Different combinations of methods are used for data capture at pre(event)-arrival activities, pre-networking activities and networking activities. For each set of activities within the observation process, protocols are briefly described.
3.6.5 Systematic Data Capture in Multi-method Observation

This chapter argues that qualitative systematic observation has considerable value yet continues to be under-utilised as a research tool in marketing and, instead, qualitative observation generally is informal and ad hoc, thus limiting its effectiveness (LeCompte & Preissle-Goetz 1982). Some would argue that conducting observation as part of scientific research requires systemisation and would further argue that it is the lack of this that has limited its use. Observation research has been defined as ‘the systematic recording of observable phenomena or behaviour in a natural setting’ (Gorman & Clayton 2005, p. 40). It is argued that to record systematically means there is a protocol or protocols in place. Such protocols are intended to prescribe the nature of the information that is sought and/or methods of recording, enabling particular elements of what is observed to be recalled and analysed (Mays & Pope 1995). Therefore, it is argued that observation that lacks systematic protocols cannot and does not substantially contribute to research outcomes (Adamo et al. 2009; Agafonoff 2006).

Systematising the collection and analysis of observation improves both reliability and validity (LeCompte & Preissle-Goetz 1982). Reliability improves because common and articulated methods are used, with greater consistency being the likely outcome. There is an increased likelihood that information collected at different points of time and/or in different contexts is more directly comparable and comparison will be of better quality. Validity is enhanced as directed information collection is more likely to result in data that is in line with research objectives. However, arguably, too much systematisation could lead to decreased validity. Important and/or interesting information could be overlooked if a protocol or template does not provide directions for when and how to include it. Therefore, this chapter argues for balance in systematised collection, methods and protocol that explicitly includes devices for the systematic recording of phenomena central to the research, as well as the (non-systematic) recording of observations of interesting, unusual and potentially relevant data.

The value of multi-method observation is demonstrated in the following sections where the research design of observations, for the study of networking events, is described.
3.6.6 Research Design of Observation for the Study of Networking Events

Three different styles of observation (each including a number of methods) were included in the design. Four events involved focusing on the micro-level observation; that is, observation of three to five individuals. This involved cycling between those individuals and recording their behaviours during the event. Two events involved more macro observation for patterns of behaviour across the event as a whole. This included consideration of the configuration of attendees into groups, and evolution of those groups during the course of the event as well as changes in their proximity. Further, in two events the researcher focused on the “observation” of her own behaviour as an event-attending networker. The intended research design of this immersive approach was for the researcher to engage in the networking event as a complete participant.

Observation protocols were constructed for the different types of observation. The protocol included what was to be observed, how the recording of observations was to be expedited and what was to be included in the observation. To manage this, a time based event framework was used to list the activities of interest and determine the aspects of those activities that would be included in the observation.

Pre-arrival activities included fine tuning of the protocols to align with the specific nature of a given event. This was facilitated by receiving a final briefing (to augment the initial briefing) on the nature of the event to be held, including particulars on size, venue, topic and type of people who were likely to attend. Also one week prior to arrival an information sheet was sent to all attendees registered for the event, ensuring they were aware of the research and had the opportunity to ask questions or opt out of participating. For the first type of observation, where several attendees were “followed” from arrival to departure, pre-arrival activities also included making contact with a number of event attendees and seeking approval to focus on them during the event and to later conduct follow-up interviews (further discussed in Section 3.7). This information was included in a field work journal and used in subsequent interpretation of observations.

The following section describes the process of observation that took place at networking events, separated into pre, during and post phases. Preliminary
descriptions of what occurred in each phase are included; these are expanded in subsequent sections.

**Pre-event Activities**

Prior to attending a networking event the protocols determining the different types of observations to be undertaken and the number and nature of events to be attended were determined. These protocols were developed through the assistance of the pilot study. The specifics of events to be attended were dictated by availability; that is, what events the sponsoring organisation (WSBC) had scheduled during the data collection period. However, as a large number of events were scheduled during this period, choices were possible. As recommended by Yin (2009), events were chosen to maximise diversity although very small events with few attendees were avoided. A minimum of six events was set but the maximum number of events to attend was not predetermined: observation continued until saturation had been reached – that is, until no new behavioural/interaction processes were being observed. This resulted in eight professional networking events being attended over a five-month period, with considerable diversity in participant size and event type.

**Pre-networking Activities**

The pre-networking activities were those that took place from when the researcher arrived at the event until the event started, and involved familiarisation with the physical space of the event and the methods the organisers were using to run the event. The researcher would arrive at the event 20 minutes before attendee registration opened, which allowed sufficient time to greet the organisers, check the name tags on the registration table to see who was attending the particular event, and perhaps further to consider who (else) the researcher might want to observe and photograph or greet during the networking time.

Observational data collection started during this phase. These data capture methods included photographing, recording of stream-of-consciousness impressions as well as making structured notes. The first set of photographs was taken immediately after the researcher’s arrival, and included introductions of and orientation by organisers of the registration table set up, room set up including tables (if it was a sit down event), the allocated space for networking, sponsor and member signage usually in the form
of banners, the organisers finalising set up of the room and any event attendees who arrived early. Pre-event data capture assisted the researcher to not only collect information about context, but observation of the networking space free of the networking crowd helped in subsequent spatial and environmental analysis. It also assisted in the capture of the behaviours and interactions of early event attendees as they entered the room and positioned themselves in an empty space. Audio recording started at this time and preliminary impressions of what was being observed were recorded.

**Networking Activities**

Events often focused on a lecture or speech but also inevitably included interpersonal networking time before this main event. During the networking time, attendees were given the opportunity and encouraged to interact and engage with other attendees. Behaviour was complex and evolving. The nature of the event, including its physical environment, determined optimal observation positions. At the beginning of an event, observation was from the periphery of the networking space; that is, the area where attendees stand around and network prior to the commencement of the formal part of the event. For events where particular attendees were the focus, the researcher would make general observations into her recorder until a focal attendee arrived. At that point the researcher would briefly introduce herself and commence taking photographs and observing the focal subject as they progressed through the event. A pilot study highlighted that continuous observation was not required to gather comprehensive information on a subject’s networking process. Instead observations were recorded and photos taken at regular time intervals (5–10 minutes). This allowed several participants to be focused on at any given event.

In the following section the detailed protocols that were used for networking behaviour observation are discussed further. Protocols discussed here include consideration of the scope of the observation, protocol for selecting further people to be observed (beyond those pre-selected) and content and nature of observation recording. The nature of these protocols’ evolution and the changes to the design of the observations are also considered, as this illustrates the possibilities for including abductive elements in the research design. The original intent was to use two types of observations (focused on particular individuals and the overall networking taking
place at the event) with a semi-detached observer’s role at both. However, attendee-initiated interactions with the researcher at early events made the value of an embedded participant style of observation apparent. As discussed further below, this led to undertaking an additional type of observation, such that the differing observer perspectives could be considered.

3.6.7 The Role of the Observer

Earlier sections highlighted the centrality of ascertaining the observer’s role in line with one’s scientific stance. The following highlights the practicalities of this; specifically, that it is not possible in naturalistic settings to remain completely within an observer role. This led to multiple observation designs being developed and used (and subsequently compared). The protocols for observation are discussed below, with the focus on the intended research design for the observer as participant as well as the complete participant role.

Intended Research Design: Observer as Participant

During the networking events it was impossible to avoid being part of the networking to some degree. While a largely observer role was intended (i.e. observer as participant) participants had not been advised to avoid interaction with the researcher, and merely being part of a social space where interaction was a primary goal and others were interacting led to a certain amount of participation. “Other” event attendees (i.e. people who were not the focus of observations) often approached and expressed an interest in what was happening and the nature of the research underpinning the observations. Courtesy demanded interaction and this no doubt impacted on the dynamic of the networking processes taking place. It provided unexpected value, as short impromptu interviews/conversations resulted from many of these interactions (as suggested by Baker 2006). These allowed for an opportunity to contextualise observations into a rich(er) ecology and provided the opportunity to recruit more research participants, as discussed in the following section. However, it also meant less time was available to take notes, record observations and take photos.

There were protocols for recording observations descriptive of the focal subjects’ behaviour and more generally. The latter involved the researcher moving around the networking space observing general patterns of behaviour, and how groups or
individuals moved around the room and interacted with others. This was informed to some degree by the theories of social networks, with group sizes, changes in membership, spatial configuration and density noted. The observation of focal individuals (and often others) involved more focused and systematic observations at an individual level. Their behaviour relative to the group they were in was the focus, with consideration given to the relative frequency and intensity of interactions with the other members, changes in their spatial relationship with others in the group, their body language as they interacted (and withdrew) from others, their behaviour if/when they changed groups and how these things changed as they transitioned through the phases of the event.

**Intended Research Design: Complete Participant**

To enable greater reflection and identification with the networking process, observation also involved adopting a complete participant role at two of the eight networking events. Here the researcher engaged with those observed and behaved like a member of the networking community.

Different methods of data capture were used at each of these events. At one, a research assistant discretely followed and photographed the researcher around the room and these photos were subsequently used to elicit reflections. At the other event the researcher–participant was not photographed, although a photographer employed by WSBC took some photos. For both, the researcher recorded an in-depth reflection of what had happened and the meaning of this for her immediately after the event. The different treatments ensured that for one event there was a comprehensive, externally generated record and for the other there was a networking experience that was more naturalistic; that is, not influenced by the presence of a photographer and the researcher’s response to that form of observation.

The original research design intended the researcher to use no protocols and totally immerse herself in the situation, and then subsequently to reflect on those experiences. But the researcher found she was unable to become a complete participant. Instead she combined participation with a researcher role – the inability to become a complete participant has been noted by others including Baker (2006). The researcher developed a check list prior to the event that included possible topics
for observation and ways of observing. The checklist included potential quasi experiments such as:

- What happens if I stand alone?
- What happens if I approach someone standing alone?
- What happens when I approach a small group of people (fewer than 4)?
- What happens when I stand with a small group of people (fewer than 4)?
- What happens when I approach a large group of people (greater than 4)?
- What happens when I stand with a large group of people (greater than 4)?
- How do my interactions differ between attendees with varied demographics and networking experience?
- What are the benefits of moving around the room versus staying in the same spot?

The protocol for observation was progressively updated based on what happened during the course of these quasi experiments. The nature of the experiments, the situations that stimulated the decision to undertake them and their results were then noted as part of the post-event reflections/debrief. In conclusion, despite the intentions of the original research design the reality is that the researcher was never purely a complete participant.

### 3.6.8 Selection and Recruitment

Selection and recruitment took place at various phases in the networking process. In some cases it was predetermined and those being observed were recruited before their attendance at the event, while others were recruited at the event itself. Protocols for the selection and recruitment of participants to observe differed depending on whether they were to be a focus throughout an event or were observed in passing during an event. For selected participants, this was predetermined to ensure that the researcher had their consent to capture a series of photographs throughout the event and that they would agree to take part in a follow-up interview. Pre-selection also facilitated recruitment of a diverse sample of participants who differed according to demographics (age, gender), seniority in their respective organisations and event attendance experience (first-time or inexperienced event attendees versus long-time active attendees). A number of forms of recruitment were used to assist in acquiring
a diverse sample. Some participants were recommended by the WSBC as experienced attendees who might be interesting to observe. And, to get more diversity, the researcher approached a number of people through cold calling from a list of attendees of past events, and through approaching archetype attendees, such as, people demonstrating easily identifiable and or extreme behaviours.

3.6.9 Recording of Observations

Observation data has been traditionally collected within a written structured template and/or with written field notes (Mays & Pope 1995). This provided effective description but also reflected the technology of the times and conformed to standard practice of distancing oneself from what was observed to retain objectivity. However, it also resulted in diminished validity, as less behaviour was observable and choices had to be made as to what to record or not.

To mediate these issues, two forms of digital technology were used to record observations in this study: a semi-professional camera and a digital recorder. Photographic surveys were used to record observations and capture the interactions of individuals engaging in the networking events (discussed further in Section 3.6.10). The observer also narrated into a recorder throughout the networking events, describing what was being observed and what the observer was doing, including the contexts in which photos were being taken and the researcher’s reflections. A protocol directed this process, with focus on interconnecting the photos’ narrative, recording those observations that could not be captured by the photographs and requiring the researcher to substantively reflect on the deeper processes that were taking place during the events (a sample of this protocol can be found in Appendix 2). To avoid disruption and change in attendees’ behaviour, the researcher periodically moved away from where attendees were congregated, talked into the digital recorder and at times wrote supplementary notes. Although this compromised immediacy of observation to some degree, it also ensured that background noise was avoided and the privacy of people’s conversations was protected.
3.6.10 Photographic Surveys

A central part of the observation data capture was via the photographic survey. This reflects the increasing use of photographs in social science research, which has been in part attributed to quality of reproduction and the growth of interest in visual presentations (Jenkings, Woodward & Winter 2008). With photography technology available, there is a greater “closeness” to the researched in that more information about participants and their behaviours is recorded and saved to be subsequently analysed in greater depth.

Photographic surveys were used in this study for two main reasons. First, taking photographs of attendees allowed the researcher to record observations and capture the interactions of individuals engaging in the networking events. This allowed for detailed records of networking interactions and multiple reviewing and reanalysis of data (Spanjaard & Freeman 2006). Second, these photographs were used in the subsequent interviews of focal participants, where the photographic elicitation technique was used (Clark-Ibáñez 2004; Jenkings, Woodward & Winter 2008) (discussed subsequently). Interestingly, although photos have appeared for almost a century in connection with the social sciences, usually under the headings “visual sociology”, “visual ethnography” and “visual anthropology” (Banks 2001; Collier & Collier 1986; Harper 1988), photos have rarely been used in business studies (Petersen & Østergaard 2003).

Organisational photography is a vast concept, which covers a range of different methods, from analysing and interpreting photos taken by the researcher to having respondents take photos themselves and/or interviewing the respondents about them. There is a need for a coherent overview of these different methods, and their underlying assumptions and implications (Petersen & Østergaard 2003). Petersen and Østergaard (2003) propose the following framework, in Table 3.3, for understanding this method. This study focuses on quadrants 1 and 3 of the table, which cover the capture and analysis of photographs by the researcher and the use of photographs in subsequent interviews with respondents.
Table 3.3  Organisational Photography

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status of the Photos</th>
<th>Role of the Researcher</th>
<th>Photos are taken by the Researcher</th>
<th>Photos are taken by the Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Photos as data per se – photo analysis</td>
<td>1. The researcher takes the photos, analyses them and concludes on the basis of the photo material</td>
<td>2. The researcher lets the respondents take the photos but analyses them on their own</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photos as elicitation – photo views</td>
<td>3. The researcher takes the photos and discusses them with respondents during an interview</td>
<td>4. The researcher lets the respondents take the photos and discusses them with the respondents during an interview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Petersen & Østergaard 2003, p. 4)

Photographic surveys were used instead of videography for a number of reasons. First, taking photographs within a social setting is less intrusive than video recording and is particularly so in the observing of conversations. This means the content of conversation is not captured in the observation, with the implication that the content cannot then be independently verified. While conversation verification might have been optimal, it was not the primary focus. Instead, these investigations into networking focused on the nature of approach and relationship initiation. Also, photos allowed for greater focus on the participants who consented to participate, and assisted in preserving the privacy of those with whom they interacted.

**Selection and Recruitment**

The photos were intended to both capture the overall event environment, process and dynamics of the event (for all events) and to focus on selected participants in great depth (for some events). At each event the goal was to photograph participants as they moved around and networked, unless they had specifically opted out of the process, with periodic photos taken at various times during the event. Focus participants were identified in a number of different ways. Firstly, participants were recommended by the WSBC management team prior to each upcoming event where focused participants were sought. Another selection method was to approach archetype attendees, i.e. people demonstrating easily identifiable and or extreme behaviours, before an event concluded and ask whether they might be interested in participating further in the study. To ascertain a broad spectrum of responses, there
was a focus on trying to recruit a diverse sample of participants based on demographic (age, gender) and event attendance experience (new attendee, long-time active attendee).

**Photographic Survey Protocols**

Protocols guided decisions as to how the researcher moved around the room and what to photograph. This ensured consistency of photographs across events and focal participants. However, this protocol also included provision to take photographs of idiosyncratic nuances of participants and their interactions and to record the unexpected.

As previously discussed, the researcher would arrive 20 minutes before attendee registration. Initial photographs included images of the name tags on the registration table. At the same time name tags on the registration table were checked to see who else was attending the particular event allowing for last minute consideration of who to approach during the networking time if required.

In addition to photographs of the registration table set up pre event photographs focused on, room set up including tables (if it was a sit down event), the allocated space where networking would take place, sponsor and member signage usually in the form of banners, the organisers final set up of the room and any event attendees who had arrived early. Pre event photo surveys also allowed the researcher to ascertain good positions from which to conduct subsequent photo surveys and observations during the event.

For during event photographs, depending on the nature of the event the researcher took a position on the sideline of the networking space, where during most events attendees stand around and interact prior to the formal commencement of the event. Taking general photographs at this point, when the focused participant arrived the researcher would then briefly introduce herself and commence taking photographs of the focal subject as they progressed through the event (at regular time intervals, usually dependent on the number of participants being focused on during any given event).

However, the protocol for taking photographs varied according to what kind of observation was being made. For example, when the focus was on a particular
participant the protocol directed photos to be taken that recorded the following information:

- Who the attendee entered the event with
- Where they stood in the networking space
- Who they initially approached and how they interacted with them
- Whether the attendee stayed in the same spot or moved around the room
- Whether the attendee approached other people
- Who they sat with if it was a sit down event
- How they interacted when seated at a table
- What body language was displayed throughout and changes in body language
- How participants interacted with the environment/event displays.

The protocol also included instructions guiding the transfer of focus from one focal participant to another.

The majority of photographs taken for events that focused on a few event attendees were of these predetermined subjects/activities. The remainder of photographs at these events were more general, and included:

- Physical environment, size, layout of the venue
- How (other) people positioned themselves within and move around the networking space
- More general social interactions
- How groups formed and interacted with one another
- Awkward social dynamics
- How people moved around the room
- (Other) Attendees projecting confidence and those who seemed timid, particularly during the networking time.

This latter protocol also guided the photography process at the two events where focus was on the event as a whole instead of particular attendees.

A somewhat different protocol was used at the two events where the researcher became a participant. At the one where an assistant photographed interaction, the
protocol used was similar to that used at the events focusing on a few participants with particular instructions to photograph:

- Physical networking space
- Who the researcher engaged with?
- How the researcher moved around the room?
- Who the researcher exchanged business cards with?

At the other event no photographs were taken by the researcher or her assistant; however, as mentioned, there was a photographer present and photos were provided to the researcher to assist with reflection and subsequent analysis.

3.7 Interview

3.7.1 Interview Participants

Interview participants were recruited in two main ways:

1. Follow-up interviews were conducted with all attendees who were followed through an entire event (19 people were so observed).
2. Interviews were conducted with people that attended the events but had not been observed in this in-depth way (11 people). They were recruited in the following ways:

- WSBC made a number of recommendations as to who the researcher may be interested in talking to
- Independent of the WSBC the researcher approached a number of people through (i) cold calling; (ii) approaching them at the event as they seemed to be interested in the research or they displayed patterns of behaviour that the researcher was interested in understanding
- Referrals by interview participants.

3.7.2 Data Collection Procedure

The second phase of the research design involved in-depth interviews. Qualitative data was gathered using semi-structured interviews to establish rapport, and help to
understand the complexities of relationship development and networking processes. The use of semi-structured interviews gave the researcher an opportunity to ask follow-up questions allowing issues to be explored in more depth (Burns & Bush 2006; Neuman 2006). The interviews included a discussion of the nature/role/history of the individual’s social and, in particular, professional networks as well as consideration of the network(s) of his/her organisation. Explicit examples of overlaps between professional and organisational networks and vice versa and assessment of value emerging were sought as well as discussion of their networking processes. Photo elicitation using a portfolio of photographs taken during the observation phase and illustrating the different phases of a networking event was then presented during the interview (as suggested by Harper 2002).

3.7.3 Interview Structure

The interview template (Appendix 3) guided the content of the interviews and, in many instances, which topics were discussed. However, there was deviation from the structure. During the interview process, participants were encouraged to share their experiences and stories in their responses. This often shaped the content of the interview and the order in which things were considered.

Interview times were based on key informant availability and all occurred within their work environment. Interviews were between 45 and 60 minutes in duration. The interview questions, although grouped into theoretical areas, were not asked in the same order for each respondent. This ensured that respondents were not led to particular answers and any bias as to responses on the part of the researcher was reduced. More information was obtained from respondents due to the open-ended nature of the questions asked. In order to digitally audio record the responses, permission was sought from participants and in all cases permission was granted.

At the beginning of the interview process, participants were asked questions regarding how they would describe their networks and were then given the opportunity to complete an Ego Net Exercise (using a process similar to Young et al. 2011). This exercise involved the participants completing a prepared Ego Net template (see Appendix 4) where they could indicate those people/organisations that made up their network and indicate links between those people/organisations.
identified and whether they were positioned in their personal, professional or organisational networks. It is important to note that participants were able to position people and organisations in an overlapping representation of the three networks. Prior to the participant starting off with this exercise they were provided with a set of definitions to guide their completion of the template. These definitions were based on the way Zofi & Meltzer (2010) define personal, professional and organisational networks (previously discussed in Chapter 2 Section 2.3.1).

The reason as to why an Ego Net Exercise was conducted at the beginning of the interview was so participants could start to think about their network and consider not only who they were connected to but also in what capacity this connection exists. By starting the interview discussion, using this reflective exercise, participants were encouraged to identify who their network is made up of, whether these network partners belong in a personal, professional or organisational part of their network, and whether overlaps exist. This exercise was an important prompt for the participant as it provided them with a visual queue that they could refer to in support of their discussion. Referring back to the Ego Net meant that participants were not just giving top-of-mind responses but that they were sufficiently involved and reflective during the interview. This exercise prompted further conversation regarding the participant’s propensity to mix business with pleasure so to speak. Do people draw a distinct line between business contacts and personal contacts or are these lines blurred? Not only was the focus on identifying who sits where on a network map but also how and why. How did they make these connections and why did they have either a defined relationship or more fluid relationship?

The topic of networking events was then discussed with regard to the participant’s history of attending networking events and how they were introduced to this way of networking. Then the participant was prompted to reflect on and indicate the value that they gained by attending networking events. After this, the networking process was discussed. This networking process included pre-event considerations taken by the participants, behaviour conducted during the networking event (beginning, middle and end phases of the event) and the ways in which participants then followed up with contacts made after the events.
When focusing on the during-event behaviour, the technique of photo elicitation took place. The way in which this section was structured is that the participant was asked to think about a networking event as having three phases: the beginning, middle and end phase. After being asked what things they did during each phase of the event they were then shown some photographs. These photographs were either generic, in that they captured typical event phases (See Appendix 5), or focused, in that they included the interview respondent as they transitioned through the event phases. The choice of what set of photographs to use was based on whether the informant had been observed in depth during the course of an event, such that there was a portfolio of photographs of their behaviour to use during the interview. Where this portfolio was available informants were then encouraged to make comments as to what they saw in the photographs, indicating whether this was typical of their event behaviour/process.

The use of photographs in interviews provided a number of benefits. ‘Images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness than do words … (it is) an interview process that provides a different kind of information’ (Harper 2002, p. 13). The use of photographs facilitated the ability to elicit stories, examples and anecdotes of business networking activities. Such stories present personally constructed views of a shared world (Hopkinson 2003). Stories are a particularly effective analytical device for the study of co-created phenomena such as relationships and networks. The similar and different foci of the stories, the choice of what topics to relate with stories and the congruence and divergence of the stories presented all offer potential insights (Alvesson & Karreman 2000). A literature review uncovered some examples of photo elicitation in business research for example retail store design (Kent & Kirby 2009), organisational research (Ray & Smith 2011) and consumer experiences in a service environment (Venkatraman & Nelson 2008).
Protocol for Selecting Photographs

Of the photographs taken for each of the focused participants a number of photos were selected to be discussed during the interviews. These photographs were selected based on a number of criteria:

- A limit on the photographs that could be shown during the interview for discussion keeping in mind the time limit. No more than eight photographs were used.
- The photos included the focused person or the networking environment at that particular event.
- Photos that captured the focus person talking to or interacting with different/same groups of people.
- Photos that captured the participant as they transitioned throughout the initial, middle and end phases of the networking event.

Focused participants are identified and the number of photographs taken is indicated in Appendix 6, although this is organised by event rather than participant. With those participants where zero photographs were taken, this means that these participants were approached after the event, at which point their participation was sought. A generic set of photographs displaying typical event types and behaviour at events was used for those participants.

3.7.4 Data Preparation and Entry

All interviews were progressively emailed to professional transcribers who produced verbatim transcripts of each interview in Microsoft Word. Clear instructions were given to the professional transcribers with regard to the type of formatting required for the Lexicographic analysis that is reported in the following chapter. The file for each interview was then checked for accuracy by the researcher, by listening to the original recording while reading the word file. Transcription errors were corrected.
3.8 Survey Instrument

This survey was conducted so as to capture a snapshot of a larger sample of professional networkers and to be used as a confirmatory/validating tool for the observation and interview data.

The survey contained four sections (see Appendix 7 for copy of the survey). The first asked about the participant’s network and included items concerned with size and recent evolution of the respondent’s professional network. The second sought to understand the way the participants approach/behave in the networking process, addressing their preparation prior to events, patterns of behaviour during events and nature and amount of following up. The third section focused on the participant’s membership and involvement in networking events and online networking sites and included items on regularity of event attendance and activeness on social networking sites. The last section elicited participant demographics.

The items were designed using the theories presented in Chapter 2, in particular considering the literature of business networking behaviours, as there were no previously existing scales that were suitable for the focus of the study. The justification for each item is discussed in Appendix 8. Some items used a six-point Likert-type scale (6 = “describes well” to 1 = “describes poorly”) while other items were in the form of multiple selection questions; that is, to select as many of the following as apply. These items were grouped to enable consideration of (i) the nature of respondent approach to networking (event participation, perceived value and goals) and their micro behaviour (i.e. activity); (ii) before; (iii) during; and (iv) after attending networking events. These groupings are theoretically informed using theories of networking and process.

3.8.2 Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaire was distributed using two methods. The first was at a WSBC End of Year (Networking) Event (one of their largest annual events) in November 2011. At the event there was a clearly identified survey booth located near the designated networking space and attendees were invited to complete the survey on the spot or take it back to their tables to complete and return prior to leaving the event. During
this event there were two formal announcements reminding attendees to complete the survey.

The survey was also distributed online by the WSBC to their database of 3500, one week after the End of Year Event, with a reminder nine days later. A final reminder was sent two weeks later. Each email was sent with a covering letter/information sheet explaining the survey as well as the ethical considerations, approval and contact details of the researcher. Those completing the survey were offered the incentive of receiving ongoing updates on the various parts of the research if they provided contact details.

3.8.3 Survey Response, Data Preparation and Entry

Across both the event and online distribution methods a total of 3500 surveys were sent out. Of the 3500 surveys, 220 were completed and returned this resulted in a 6.2% response from total membership. It is important to note that this included people who do not attend events, therefore the meaningful response rate is somewhat higher. Based on consultation with WSBC, of the 3500 respondents that received the survey approximately a third of them had attended one or more networking events. As such, a more appropriate response rate of 19% can be estimated. Each returned questionnaire was reviewed for completeness and, of the 220, three were considered unusable due to large amounts of missing data, giving a total of 217 useable responses.

Each of the 217 useable survey responses was separately coded and imported into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). These entries were cross checked for inconsistencies by two people to confirm that the data entry was precise. Coding error was check using the Frequencies command in SPSS.

3.9 Multi-method Analysis

The data captured in the three parts of the research design were first analysed separately and then considered as a whole. The details of interrelating the three stages of research are indicated in Appendix 9, where a table sets out the nature of the information that was sought. The specifics of the analysis are, however, primarily
considered in the following chapter as the findings and the specifics of the analysis used to produce those findings are presented.

Prior to a multi-method analysis across the various forms of data capture an analysis of information within each method was undertaken:

- **Observation method:** Data was primarily analysed comparatively in that commonalities of individuals’ behaviour processes and interaction patterns were compared to that of the macro behavioural patterns captured at the events. The observational data analysis was approached systematically using the guidelines provided by Braun and Clarke (2006).
- **Interview method:** Interview transcripts were put through Leximancer so as to generate a discovery concept map which would provide a summary/overview of the discussions that took place during the interviews.
- **Survey:** The survey data was analysed using SPSS to profile event attendees’ behaviours using cluster analysis as a validation to the observation and interview data.

### 3.10 Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was sought by all event attendees allowing the researcher to photograph their interactions during the events. The consent also included the participant’s approval for their photographs to be used in this thesis; however, neither names of individuals or the organisations they represent are to be linked to them in any way. Event attendees were given the opportunity to opt out of this study. Where consent was not obtained, faces have been obscured if photos inadvertently include those attendees. Consent was also sought from interview participants to digitally voice record their interviews and use the de-identified responses in the writing up of this thesis.
Chapter 4: Analysis

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter detailed the methodology applied to this research; this chapter outlines and discusses the analysis of the data collected for this study. As per the research design discussed in Chapter 3, this chapter presents an analysis of the observation data to understand the patterns of behaviour professionals display while engaging in the networking process. This is followed by analysis of the interview and survey data, which explores the value business professionals attain by participating in deliberate networking activities.

This chapter consists of four major sections. Section 4.2 discusses the way in which analysis was conducted on the observational data and presents the findings that emerge from such analysis. Section 4.3 illustrates how the interview data was processed and examined through the use of Leximancer and presents a conceptual and relational analysis of the interview transcripts. Section 4.4 discusses the analysis and results of the survey data, while Section 4.5 combines these multiple datasets to see what added information can be uncovered. The interrelations and synergies of the findings are also discussed in the concluding chapter.

4.2 Observational Analysis

The focus of the analysis for the observational data is to understand the behaviour of participants at networking events and identify the influence situational variables like social surroundings, physical surroundings and temporal perspective have on such behaviours.

As discussed in Chapter 3, qualitative systematic observation has considerable value yet continues to be under-utilised as a research tool in marketing and, instead,
qualitative observation generally is informal and ad hoc, thus limiting its effectiveness (LeCompte & Preissle-Goetz 1982). The observational data collection was conducted systematically in that there were protocols in place that prescribed the nature of the information that was sought and/or recorded in ways that enabled particular elements of what was observed to be recalled and analysed (Mays & Pope 1995).

Systematising the collection and analysis of observation improves both reliability and validity (LeCompte & Preissle-Goetz 1982). Reliability improves because common and articulated methods are used, with greater consistency being the likely outcome. There is an increased likelihood that information collected at different points of time and/or in different contexts is more directly comparable and comparison will be of better quality. Validity is enhanced as directed information collection is more likely to result in data that is in line with research objectives.

In this study observational data was primarily analysed comparatively in that commonalities of individuals' behaviour processes and interaction patterns were compared to that of the macro behavioural patterns captured at the events. To recap, there were three different styles of observation included in the design of data collection. Four events involved focusing the observation on three to five individuals as they progressed throughout the event; two events involved more general observation of patterns of behaviour across the event as a whole; and in two events the observer focused on the “observation” of their own behaviour as an event-attending networker. When considered together these three observational data types provided valuable insights into networking behaviour throughout an event.

### 4.2.1 Method of Analysis

Often a researcher’s attempt to quantify observation, like duration of behaviour or behavioural intensity, is placed into a scale; for example, based on specified guidelines the researcher times the behaviour or judges the emotional intensity displayed while it is occurring, assigning a numerical category to the latter. While temporal measurement is straightforward, qualitative judgements converted to a scale have not been used very much in social research (an exception is the work of Spanjaard, Young & Freeman 2014). Nor are these transformations to numbers used
in this study. Instead, description and comparison of behaviours is used. This involves in-depth articulation of everything that theory and judgement tell the observer might be relevant and/or important. This is the reason that the description of this analysis is extensive – the observational data is substantial and the process of determining relevance was gradual and iterative.

The observational data analysis was approached systematically. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest an outline that is intended to guide researchers through the phases of systematically analysing qualitative data. It is emphasised that their guidelines are flexible and not to be taken as strict rules for analysis but rather are intended to be adapted to the research question and data being analysed. Table 4.4 below summarises the phases of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006); note that it is not linear in nature but rather is a recursive process where the researcher can move back and forth between the phases as needed (Braun & Clarke 2006; Ely et al. 1997; Patton 1990).

Table 4.1 Phases of Thematic Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Description of the Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Familiarising yourself with your data</td>
<td>Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Generating initial codes</td>
<td>Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Searching for themes</td>
<td>Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Reviewing themes</td>
<td>Checking in the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Defining and naming themes</td>
<td>Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells; generating clear definitions and names for each theme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Producing the report</td>
<td>The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Braun & Clark 2006, p. 35)
The focus of analysis of this study’s observational data is not to conduct a thematic analysis but rather to understand the behaviours of participants at networking events and identify those factors that influence their behaviour. However, Braun and Clarke’s (2006) suggestions for analysing qualitative data in a systemic fashion are relevant and have been used to partially inform this analysis – but they are not used as a rigid process. In particular, the organisational process described in steps one to three of Table 4.1 and the review process presented in step four are relevant. However, the process used was more abductive in that these four phases were not sequentially used but simultaneously used (Dubois & Gadde 2002).

In line with the guidelines provided by Braun and Clarke (2006), the first phase in this analysis was to transcribe the observational recordings taken during the event. As discussed in Chapter 3, for much of the observational process comments about what was being observed were audio recorded in a stream-of-consciousness manner. The process of transcribing audio recordings is often outsourced as it is seen to be a time-consuming and monotonous task. However, for the observation notes it was decided that there was value to be gained by the researcher undertaking the transcription process herself and becoming familiar with the data (as suggested by Braun & Clarke 2006; Riessman 1993).

Using the observational transcriptions involved the researcher developing cross-referenced tables for each of the observed events so that the observational data (i.e. the audio recordings and photographs) could be embedded into a common document and interrelated. Table 4.2 presents a sample of a cross-referenced table. As indicated, these tables included a column for the photographs taken, a description of the photographs and the related observational transcripts, which all were organised chronologically; that is, in the order in which behavioural episodes unfolded at the event.
### Table 4.2 Sample of a Cross-reference Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Manufacturers Connection Roundtable (22/11/11)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Photo #</strong></td>
<td><strong>Photographs – What Is Happening</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>383–388 390–391</td>
<td>Room set up. WSMN banner. ResMed (sponsor/host) banner. Registration table. Name tags. Natural environment through window. Classroom U-shaped seating facing PowerPoint presentation “Optimising Employee Engagement with Peter Black”. Tea and coffee table. Notepad and pen on tables and WSMN pack on seats. Electric and natural lighting. Defined space between the roundtable portion of the event and the networking space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>389</td>
<td>First event attendee enters, registers and goes straight to the coffee/tea table.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>392–393</td>
<td>Two ladies enter together and go to find a seat. One woman standing alone holding a coffee cup. Another woman standing alone about 3 m away.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>398</td>
<td>The two ladies that entered together are helping themselves to tea and coffee. The other woman still standing alone with her coffee cup.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>401–402 411</td>
<td>Two women standing near coffee station talking. John from WSBC enters the conversation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As discussed in Chapter 3 Section 3.6.6, the observational data was collected using three different perspectives: macro, where the event as whole was observed; micro, where individuals at the event were observed; and single, where the researcher was a participant observer at the event. As a result, the cross-referenced tables varied slightly in layout and content. See Appendix 10 for a sample of the observational cross-reference tables across the three different perspectives. Table 4.2 is a sample of a cross reference table developed for an event where micro observations were the focus. This table shows the photograph numbers in the first column, which recorded a particular behavioural episode for ease of reference. The second column provides a description of the photos developed post observation. The third column is the portion of the observation notes related to the photo and the fourth column indicates the code that was developed in the second phase of the analysis to allow similar behaviour episodes to be considered together.

The next phase of the analysis was concerned with developing the codes indicated in the right-hand column of, for example, Table 4.2. These initial codes were then embedded into the tables as indicated. The final phases of the observational classification analysis involved defining and checking the behavioural patterns and influence factors against not only the coded data in a particular event table but also against the other observation event tables and the data as a whole.

### 4.2.2 Findings of Observational Data

Given the focus of the observational study was to capture and record the behaviour of participants as they engaged in the networking event, the analysis of the observational data placed behaviour at its centre. The observation of participant behaviour in this study covers both their body language as well as their overt interactions with other attendees. Body language has been defined as the ‘outward reflection of a person’s emotional condition, defined as gestures, postures, and facial expressions by which a person manifests various physical, mental or emotional states and communicates non-verbally with others’ (Schoder 2010, p. 1). It is important to note that analysis of body language is not an exact science. To understand body language and develop support for a particular conclusion requires the interpretation of several consistent signals; that is, there needs to more than one indicator of state of mind. Identifying these consistent signals/patterns is the focus of this analysis.
Another focus is the consideration of participant social interaction, which is defined as the process by which a person acts and reacts to those around them (Gueguen et al. 2009).

The next step in the analysis involved identifying factors that influenced the way in which participants behaved. Each behavioural episode was assessed for behaviours occurring and any obvious contributing factors. These were then considered collectively to identify any obvious patterns of behaviour. Systematically reviewing each of the cross-referenced tables and behaviours indicated involved noting how participants moved around the event space, the ways in which they interacted with other participants and the ways in which behaviours evolved over time during the event; for example, identifying when participants display limited social interaction during an event by standing alone and not engaging with others.

These patterns of behaviour were considered in greater depth to identify related influencing factors. Each behaviour type, as reflected by the coding scheme, was considered separately as the researcher looked for the more micro-level behaviours in terms of commonalities, differences and patterns.

Belk (1975) described these factors as “situational variables”. In addition to situational variables, sequences of action are also considered in this analysis. As discussed in Chapter 2, Belk (1975) identifies five categorises of situational variables, which are aligned with the definition of situation:

1. **Physical surroundings** are those features of a situation which are most visible including ‘decor, sounds, aromas, lighting, weather and visible configurations of merchandise’ (Belk 1975, p.159).
2. **Social surroundings** include other people who are also present, who they are, what role they have and the interactions that occur (Belk 1975).
3. **Temporal perspective** can be measured in units such as time of day or season of year. This unit of measurement can also relate to past or future events for the participant in the situation (Belk 1975).
4. **Task definition** relates to the intention of selecting, shopping for or obtaining knowledge about a purchase, whether general or specific (Belk 1975).
5. *Antecedent states* include both momentary moods and conditions. Momentary moods include feelings of ‘acute anxiety, pleasantness, hostility and excitement’ (Belk 1975, p. 159). Momentary conditions include things like tiredness and illness.

Analysis of the event observation data identified three of these five situational variables: *social surroundings, physical surroundings* and *temporal perspective*. It is worth noting that, although not captured in the observational data, the remaining two situational variables are also considered. Observation of *task definition* and *antecedent states* cannot be easily observed from behaviour and as such they are a focus of the interview data. There participants were encouraged to discuss the rationale behind their behaviour as well as how felt during the event (however these two situational variables are only indirectly discussed in the interview findings as they form part of larger concepts which are the focus of the discussion).

The first of the three factors that are relevant to the observational study relates to social surroundings and focuses on the nature of the participants based on observable demographics, specifically age and gender. This factor is concerned with how people of certain demographics behave. The second factor focuses on the physical surroundings of the event space, size and style. This factor focuses on how behaviour occurred within the particular physical space of the event. The third factor is temporal and addresses three phases of the event: the beginning, middle and end. This factor addresses the ways in which behaviour of participants evolve through time.

Table 4.3 presents a summary of the main findings that emerged from this analysis, presenting these in terms of the three situational factors identified above. For each factor the observed patterns were summarised by aggregating and classifying the findings from the cross-referenced tables. These were further differentiated based on the differences in behaviour patterns across the three different kinds of observations (macro, micro, and single).
Table 4.3  Behaviour of Participants and Influential Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observational Perspective</th>
<th>Behaviour of Participants and Influential Factors</th>
<th>Phases of the Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Macro Observational Perspective</strong></td>
<td><strong>Demographics</strong>&lt;br&gt;Male attendees tended to interact more with a number of different people during the networking time than their female counterparts. Male attendees would always greet others with a handshake whereas females would at times initiate a greeting with a kiss on the cheek. The use of mobile devices to make calls, and send messages or emails was observed as one of the biggest networking distractions. It usually involved attendees moving away from the networking space and concentrating on their mobile device. This distraction was mostly observed in male attendees.</td>
<td>Events held in a wide area encouraged attendees to move around the room more than that of a narrow networking space. During stand up style events attendees tended to congregate in groups of 2 to 6. When the event set up and location was interesting and stimulating attendees would often engage with the physical surroundings more than other attendees. Every event begins with registration, after which most if not all attendees gravitate towards the beverage area. It is at this point that most attendees will display 3 types of behaviour: (i) Approach someone they know and interact with them. (ii) Approach someone new and interact with them. (iii) Stand alone. The end phase of the event is where most attendees begin to wrap up their conversations and leave the event room. However, often times there will be a couple of small groups of attendees that linger. This lingering is increased based on whether the event is after business hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Micro Observational Perspective</strong></td>
<td><strong>Social Surroundings</strong>&lt;br&gt;Younger professionals were most likely to attach themselves to colleagues who were from the same organisation. This type of attachment behaviour was most prevalent in females. A hindrance to comfortably interacting with others is the ‘handbag’; often female attendees are carrying a drink in one hand and a handbag in the other, which when attendees were sitting around a table, often their body language would change and they would face inwards in groups of 2 or 3 and in effect turn their backs on the people sitting beside them.</td>
<td>When the event set up and location was interesting and stimulating attendees would often engage with the physical surroundings more than other attendees. During the networking phase of the event group sizes of 3–4 attendees seemed ideal. More than 4 attendees would result in people standing in large groups having one-on-one discussions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Observational Perspective</strong></td>
<td><strong>Behaviour of Participants and Influential Factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Demographics</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Social Surroundings</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>makes it difficult to have open and expressive body language with regard to greeting another attendee with a handshake as well as exchanging business cards.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Event Style</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Physical Surroundings</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Phases of the Event</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Temporal Perspective</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Single Observational Perspective</strong></td>
<td>While standing alone I would be approached by females of all ages who would introduce themselves to me. However, the only males that would initiate conversation with me tended to be those who I had previously met during my research. Women seemed to have more eye contact with me and smile. They laugh and talk about their kids, school, and like jokes. Men seem much more serious in their conversations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The larger the event size with regard to the number of attendees as well as the event space seemed to alleviate some of the anxiety and awkwardness that came with approaching another attendee to talk to. The smaller events seemed to have more awkward moments of standing alone.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Standing in a group of 3 to 4 people seems most optimal in that all participants have an opportunity to interact with each other. Standing in a group of 5 or more I would continue to have conversations with only one of the people in the group. It would be hard to carry a conversation in a larger group. The behaviour of exchanging business cards varied between participants and most often occurred during the dedicated networking portion of the event. In the initial phase of the event I found myself shying away from approaching new people and as such I sought out those people I had previously met to approach.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Within each cell there is a descriptive summary of the behaviours that appeared in the observational perspective with regard to the relevant situational factor; for example, in the left-hand column of the first row the table notes that ‘Male attendees tended to interact more with a number of different people during the networking time than their female counterparts’. This behaviour is concerned with demographics (i.e. gender) and social dynamics and was observed particularly at the two events where the patterns of interactions for the events as a whole were being observed. The various components of the table are discussed in turn in the four sections that follow. The insights associated with observational perspectives are discussed in Section 4.2.3. The following sections are concerned with demographics (social surroundings) (Section 4.2.4), event style (physical surroundings) (Section 4.2.5) and phases of the event (temporal perspective) (Section 4.2.6).

4.2.3 Observational Perspectives

Table 4.3 differentiated the macro, micro and single observational perspectives because they are not always directly comparable. When observing behaviour of participants through a macro observational perspective (i.e. where the broad patterns of behaviour rather than that of individual participants was the focus), the data collected and the findings to emerge were, not surprisingly, more broad based and focus more on the way in which participants moved around the networking space. By contrast, the micro observational perspective focused on an individual’s body language, like gestures, posture and body proximity. The single observation perspective, where the researcher was immersed in the networking event, presents a more first-hand perspective of not only her own behaviour but also the way in which other participants interacted with her.

Although these three perspectives focus on different levels of detail with regard to observed patterns of behaviour, there appears to be no substantial difference in the behaviour patterns observed based on observational perspective. That is, these perspectives do not reveal contradictory observations, but rather allow for different levels of detail within each perspective. As such, there is value in using the three perspectives.
4.2.4 Behaviour and Demographics (Social Surroundings)

As column one’s findings in Table 4.3 indicate, demographics were an important influencer of the specific behaviours observed at events. While there was considerable demographic diversity in attendees, at most events the profile of attendees skewed towards a middle aged (approx. 40–60 years) male professional, with at least half of those observed fitting this profile. On only a few occasions did the proportion of female business professionals approach 50%.

Attendees’ behaviour was strongly related to age and gender. The different behaviours observed within each demographic segment were quite consistent across the different observation types. Overall, males, particularly older males, are most likely to engage with a larger number of different groups of people during the networking time. This is in contrast to the majority of female attendees, who displayed much more reserved behaviours in their interactions with others, interacting with fewer groups and being more cautious in joining groups.

While there was considerable consistency in the general nature of behaviour for different demographic groups there were different manifestations of behaviour within each group. For example, it was most often the case that younger attendees, particularly the younger females, would attach themselves to a colleague (as indicated by name tags which identified their organisation) and would stay with them throughout the duration of the networking event. Figure 4.1 illustrates via a sequence of six photographs the attachment of a junior female attendee (Participant 001, young woman wearing glasses) whose behaviour was typical of junior event attendees. The first photograph in the top left-hand corner taken of Participant 001 (Photograph A) was taken at 11:32 am and the last photograph taken (Photograph F) was taken at 1:13 pm, as indicated in the bottom right of the photos. As is illustrated in all six photographs, Participant 001 begins the event by sitting next to the older grey-haired man, who is identified as a colleague from work. She is then photographed adjacent to the same man throughout the event. It is important to again note that the photos were taken by periodically observing Participant 001 throughout the event. Therefore, it is possible that she very briefly moved away but if so she almost immediately returned. (This procedure enabled longer processes of behaviour, in this case this attachment type behaviour, to be observed and recorded in a greater
number of individuals). This particular example is indicative of the kinds of attachment behaviour displayed by junior female attendees; however, this is one of the most extreme examples, where Participant 001 does not appear to have ventured more than a metre away from her colleague at any point during the event. The general pattern of observed behaviour was that, with respect to attachment behaviour, the more junior colleague would spend about 80% of the event time in close proximity to their colleagues and would take about 20% of the event time to venture a short distance away and interact with other attendees.

Figure 4.1  Attachment of Junior Participants

A. Female observed sitting next to older colleague.

B. Female observed standing next to older colleague at coffee stand (21 minutes after Photograph A).

C. Female standing in conversation group with colleague (2 minutes after Photograph B).

D. Female standing at food table with colleague (53 minutes after Photograph C).
Another point of difference between male and female participants was the consistency with which they would greet one another. Male attendees would inevitably greet other male attendees with a handshake. Females displayed more variation in their behaviours; for example, a more personal greeting with a kiss on the cheek given to those attendees who they seemed to be more familiar and quite friendly with. Figure 4.2 shows examples of two such greetings. In Figure 4.2, photographs A and B show both a male and female greeting one another with a kiss. These photographs illustrate how relatively close they are in proximity to one another and it is apparent in the photographs that they are leaning into one another. This type of body language indicates that both participants are open to this level of closeness and the kind of personal greeting taking place.

These photographs are representative of the way in which female participants who have a personal relationship or familiarity with another participant will greet them. In addition to obvious recognition, familiarity and friendliness was inferred through the more personal greeting and closer physical proximity of participants as they interacted. When participants appeared to be unacquainted they greeted each other with a professional handshake irrespective of gender.
Gender was also strongly associated with the degree to which attendees were “distracted” from networking events. Networking distractions are those types things that interrupt or otherwise hinder attendees from engaging in the networking process and interacting with other event attendees. Often, female attendees were observed to be “distracted” as they were carrying a drink in one hand and a handbag in the other. Periodic observation highlighted that this continued to impede networking behaviour throughout the event, as presented in Figure 4.3, Photographs A and B. In particular, it seemed more difficult for participants to have open and expressive body language when greeting another attendee with a handshake and made exchanging business cards more awkward and difficult.

Another kind of common network distraction that was observed was with regard to males and the use of their mobile phones. Male attendees were much more likely to use the mobile devices during events, as evident in Figure 4.3, Photographs C, D, E and F. It is important to note that the observed events and professional networking events in general are usually held during business hours. Therefore, it was inferred that some/all of the calls taken by attendees were work related. Subsequent interviews confirmed that a substantial number of calls received were work related and as a result event attendees are unwilling or unable to switch off their devices and concentrate on building contacts.
**Figure 4.3 Networking Distractions**

A. Female attendee turns back on networking and is searching in handbag.

B. Females standing in a group holding their handbags and drinks.

C. Male attendee walking through networking space whilst talking on the phone.

D. Male attendee stepping away from group to take a phone call.

E. Male attendee using his mobile device to read or send a message/email.

F. Male attendee standing in the middle of the networking space talking on the phone.
As discussed in Chapter 3, two events were participant–observation in nature; that is, with the researcher as a networking attendee. My personal experiences at those two events as the networker interacting with other participants also show systematic gender differences in terms of the way other attendees interacted with me. To explore this further, throughout the networking events I attended, I conducted short experiments; for example, I would stand alone to see who would approach me. In every instance it was a female attendee, either senior and junior, who approached me to initiate contact (see Figure 4.4, Photograph A). The only male attendees that approached me were those people who had previously participated in my research and already knew me (see Figure 4.4, Photograph B). When I joined a group of attendees and introduced myself, I noted that females had more eye contact with me and smiled more than males, particularly older males. With regard to conversation, females would not only engage in relevant business talk with me but also talk about family, children and more personal things than their male counterparts.

**Figure 4.4 My Networking Experience**

A. Two older female attendees that I had never met approached me while I stood alone.

B. Male attendee who I had met previously approached me to chat.

These findings suggest that demographics do play a role in influencing the behaviour of participants within the context of a networking event. There were a number of manifestations of this, but a trend across many of these was in terms of the interaction style and seeking familiarity. Women sought familiarity and security to a greater degree than men; they were also more open in their interaction styles than their male counterparts. This can be interpreted in line with theories of social
psychology (e.g. Heider 1958), which posit that people seek to relate to those that are similar to them.

In isolation these findings are not particularly insightful but, as will be subsequently discussed, when combined with other findings they do form part of a framework which provides considerable insight into the nature of networking behaviour, and the reasons for and effectiveness of it.

4.2.5 Behaviour and Event Style (Physical Surroundings)

Behaviour of participants varied depending on the size and style of the event. This influential factor focuses on the physical surroundings of the networking space. The observations clearly showed that the layout and size of the event room and in particular the networking space had an impact on the way in which participants experienced the event and also influenced their movements during the event. Once again there is consistency in behaviours observed irrespective of whether the observational perspective was macro, micro or single. The critical factor in the physical space appears to be the size and layout of the event space. This is because the nature of the space is likely to encourage or hinder participants from moving around the room and connecting with other attendees. For example, in a narrower, more constrained space, movement during the networking time was observed to be quite limited.

Figure 4.5 Photograph A shows an example of what was a relatively narrow networking space and can be compared to Photograph B of an event held in a wider, more open space. As can be seen in Photograph A, attendees look much more cramped and are standing closer in proximity to other attendees than is apparent in Photograph B. It is important to note that both of these events had over 200 attendees and so are quite comparable in terms of the number of people networking and moving around the room. The more constrained configurations appeared to limit the amount of movement between groups in contrast to the more open spaces.
Another key difference that physical environment made was whether the event was a stand up or sit down type event. During the standing up style of events where people are moving around a room networking, attendees tended to congregate in groups of two to six and would often display certain types of body language like gesturing, putting hands in their pockets or folding their arms. Eye contact was usually maintained between those attendees engaging in conversation. Although there might be up to six attendees in one group, often there would be multiple conversations occurring within one group. Groups that congregated would often stand in a closed-off circle, making it difficult for another attendee to introduce themselves and join in the conversation. It became apparent that such displays of closed-off body language would often deter others from engaging with the group. Figure 4.6 illustrates how different sized groups during standing up style events vary with regard to the open or closed nature of the participants’ body language.
In the case of a sit down style event, where attendees are seated and often being served a meal, their observed behaviour was – not surprisingly – different. “Starting conditions” (i.e. who you sit next to at the beginning of a sit down phase of an event) are critical because proximity is quite significant, as attendees do tend to engage with those people sitting on either side of them the majority of the time. One manifestation of this is when attendees would cluster into groups of two or three, with people sitting near them. They would then often face inwards, and in effect those on the periphery of the group would turn their backs on the people sitting beside or near them such that they would exclude people near them that were not part of the small group. Such behaviour hindered larger group discussions and essentially made it difficult for many of the attendees to engage with everyone on their table.

Figure 4.7 displays the body language indicative of sit down style events. Photographs A and B show how attendees behave when sitting around a table; it is apparent in both photographs that attendees engage in eye contact, conversation and a shift in body language to facing towards the attendees they are interacting with.
Figure 4.7  Groupings of Attendees, Body Language, Conversations (Sitting)

A. Attendees conversing with those sitting closest to them in a larger group.  
B. Attendees conversing with those sitting closest to them in a smaller group.

Often when the event set up and location is interesting or stimulating attendees will engage with the physical surroundings rather than other attendees, thereby taking time out of the designated networking portion of the event. Overall, the observations showed that there were many different ways in which the networking environment itself was a distraction. For example, it was observed that having stalls by sponsors or charity auctions within the networking space led attendees to engage more with these stalls than with one another at the beginning of the allocated networking time.

A sporting themed auction stand is presented in Figure 4.8 Photograph A. This stall, along with three others, were positioned within the allocated networking space at this event. Photograph B shows two male attendees having a conversation with one of the stall managers, taking time out of networking with other attendees. Photographs C and D were captured at a different event, where sponsor stalls were set up along both sides of the networking space. Photograph D once again shows how attendees engage with these stalls at the expense of engaging with other event attendees. These examples are indicative of how attendees interact with multiple components of the networking environment, whether this was the intention of event organisers or not.
The “type” of setting (i.e. the format of the event) dictated its venue – for example, an address by a prominent business person or politician would involve an auditorium style set up – and this appeared to also influence and differentiate the broad patterns of behaviour observed. The nature of the social side of an event would influence the set up and atmosphere. The more social events that occurred in a larger setting would often have food, alcohol, slightly dimmed lighting and soft background music. At these types of events attendees would often display more social interaction with others; for example, attendees would interact with more people throughout the event. The more seminar-type events, which occurred in relatively smaller settings, would often include morning/afternoon tea refreshments, fluorescent lighting and a more classroom type set up with chairs and desks. At these types of events attendees
would often display more engagement towards the speaker and the material being presented and as a result relatively less networking occurred.

During the participant–observation events it became particularly evident that the larger social events seemed to alleviate some of the anxiety and awkwardness that came with approaching another attendee to talk to. The smaller more seminar-style events seemed to have more awkward moments of standing alone. Figure 4.9 presents a social-type event in Photograph A alongside a seminar-type event in Photograph B. Photograph A is indicative of social events where attendees congregate in groups of three to four and converse with one another within a relaxed atmosphere with background music and dimmed lighting. Photograph B is indicative of a seminar event where attendees are usually engaging in what appears to be a classroom-type environment with fluorescent lighting. During these events it appeared common for attendees to be excluded from groups of conversation, resulting in them standing alone within the networking space.

**Figure 4.9 Social vs Seminar-type Environments**

A. Typical set up for social style events.

B. Typical set up for seminar style events.

### 4.2.6 Behaviour and Phases of the Event (Temporal Perspective)

A finding that emerged from the analysis of the observation data, photographs and notes is that while events vary in style and structure they all have a beginning, middle and end. These phases were identified by analysing the evolution/variation of behaviour as a particular participant transitioned through the event. The duration of these phases varied based on the nature of the event; however, on average the organisation of the event meant that about 30% of the time would be dedicated to the
initial phase, 60% of the time would be allocated to the middle phase and 10% of time was left for the end phase of the event. The initial phase usually sees attendees register for the event and congregate in one area where drinks are usually served. The middle phase of the event usually involves a speaker or some form of presentation. The end phase is when the event formalities conclude and attendees are encouraged to stay at the event and network further.

Networking opportunities are often provided throughout the event and vary based on the style of the event. These networking opportunities can be either explicit or implicit. This opportunity can come in the form of an explicit announcement by the speaker at the event, who encourages attendees to exchange business cards and network with others. A subtler networking opportunity is often provided in the form of allowing attendees the time and space to interact with one another during the event, perhaps over a drink or meal. These different ways of setting up opportunities did not appear to influence the way networking occurs; that is, the same kinds of interactions as previously described occurred irrespective of the way networking time opportunities were framed.

The observational findings suggest that the phases of an event can be an influencing factor on the behaviour of participants, in that there seemed to be patterns of behaviour typical to certain phases of the event. These patterns are now described in further detail for each behavioural phase.

**Early Phase Behaviour**

Not surprisingly, the first type of behaviour displayed by all event attendees was the event registration, where participants approached the registration desk to collect their name tag. This action is presented in Figure 4.10 Photograph A. After registering their attendance at the front door/desk, participants would either enter the event space alone or with a colleague. Observations of participant name tags, before arrival of the first attendees, indicated that on average half of the participants attend these networking events alone (in that they are the only representative of their organisation), while the other half attend with one or more workplace colleagues.
In observing the initial phase across the networking events it became apparent that there were three types of behaviours displayed consistently irrespective of type of event, venue and/or demographics. These behaviours were:

1. Participants approaching and interacting with someone they know, as indicated by the style of greeting that was observed.
2. Participants approaching and interacting with someone new.
3. Participants standing alone.

This initial behaviour is strongly influenced by whether attending alone or with someone. Those participants that entered the event space with a colleague tended to stay with them at least in the initial phase. Those standing alone tended to stand along the periphery of the event space, often with a drink in hand, as presented in Photograph B. My experiences as a participant–observer was similar to the macro and micro level observations. In the role of the networker, at least initially, I found myself shying away from approaching new people and as such I sought and gravitated towards those people I had previously met, as illustrated in Photograph C. These participant–observer experiences reflected what I had previously observed in regards to the way other attendees behaved at this stage.

**Figure 4.10    Early Phase Examples**

A. Attendees collecting name tag at registration table.  
B. Early arrivals at event. Small group formed with female standing alone.
C. Me as the ‘networker’ approaching attendees I was familiar with.

Middle Phase Behaviour

The middle networking phase of an event differs in structure based on the style of the event. At times this could be an entirely stand up or a partially sit down event. Either way, groups of attendees would form, although not all attendees would be in a group at any point in time. Those attendees that would congregate in a group tended to stay for a varied amount of time, anywhere between 10–20 minutes, before moving on to another group.

Different sized groups of people displayed different collective behaviour, with smaller groups characterised by all parties talking together and larger groups splitting into small conversational units. During the middle networking phase of the event groups of three to four seemed ideal for networking as any more than four attendees in one group often would result in people standing in a large group but having one-on-one discussions. As a result, these larger groups would often evolve and eventually close themselves off by all group members turning into each other and standing a circle, making it difficult for others to join in. Figure 4.11 Photograph A and B shows the “ideal” situation of three to four attendees standing in a group conversing, maintaining eye contact and displaying open body language, which suggests that they are all engaged in the conversation taking place within the group. Photograph C on the other hand shows how having a group larger than four attendees can result in side conversations occurring where not all attendees standing in the group are engaged with each other.

Usually those who choose to interact with others and stand in larger groups (greater than four) will position themselves in the centre of the networking space and those
who choose to stand alone or in relatively smaller groups (fewer than four) will stand on the outskirts of the room.

**Figure 4.11  Middle Phase Examples**

A. Group of three attendees conversing, displaying open body language and eye contact to one another.

B. Group of four attendees conversing, displaying open body language and eye contact to one another.

C. I am standing in a large group of five attendees. With side conversations splitting the group in half.

Another very frequently observed behaviour was the exchange of business cards. The behaviour of exchanging business cards varied between participants and most often occurred during this middle phase of the event. As per my observations as a participant some attendees would present others with a business card upon introduction, some would exchange a business card before they moved on to talk to anyone else and others would only give a business card if there was an explicit comment about making contact after the event.
End Phase of the Event and Behaviour

The end phase of the event is where the formalities (i.e. the scheduled speaker or panel) have concluded and most attendees begin to wrap up their conversations and prepare to leave. The majority of attendees leave, and very quickly, with 80% or more of attendees departing within 10 minutes of the event ending. However, sometimes there will be a couple of small groups of attendees that continue to interact with one another for up to half an hour. This type of behaviour seems to occur most often when an event is held after business hours. One plausible reason for such behaviour is the fact that attendees do not then have to rush back to the office and as such are more likely to linger.

Figure 4.12 presents a series of photographs that illustrates how attendees continue to interact with one another for a relatively extended amount of time post-event formalities. Photographs A to D show the end phase of the event over a 28-minute period, where attendee numbers begin to decrease slowly, although, all the while attendees continue to engage with one another. For those events held within business hours, attendees tend to leave as soon as the formalities of the event conclude.

Figure 4.12   End Phase Examples

A. The formalities of the event have concluded and most attendees remain seated.

B. Attendees begin to stand up and move around the room to interact with others (4 minutes after Photograph A).
Overall the observational findings reveal that there are patterns in the ways in which participants behave at networking events. As the following discussion will show, it is evident that demographics, event style and the phases of the event are influential factors when determining the nature of the behaviour of participants at an event.

It is apparent that demographics such as gender and age can play a role in the ways in which participants interact and engage at a networking event. Males, particularly older males, were observed as being more confident in their interactions with different groups of attendees as opposed to younger participants, particularly younger females, who attached themselves to colleagues. These findings were interesting and have significant managerial implications. Understanding the ways in which an organisational representative is likely to behave based on their age and gender could inform organisational policy with regard to the training and/or mentoring provided to managers prior to sending them to a networking event, as well as the possibility of implementing a mentorship program.

Given that organisations invest time and financial resources into sending representatives to these events, it makes sense that the organisation would want to get the most out of such an investment. This type of training could also cover the ways in which attendees could mediate the two main observed networking distractions (i.e. the use of a mobile device during the event, and the struggle of holding a handbag while maintaining open and expressive body language).
Similarly, the nature of the physical space influences the possibilities for and constraints to networking behaviour. People behaved differently depending on how much space was available, the general ambience and atmosphere provided and the amount of time that was made available.

Behaviour also differed at different stages of the event; however, this was dictated more by the format of the event than anything else. Networking behaviour itself was fairly similar; however, attendees were more relaxed in later-stage networking than initially. However, this was offset by most attendees exiting events after only a very short time of networking after the middle phase of the event.

4.3 Interview Analysis

As discussed in the previous chapter, follow-up interviews were done with many of those observed at events. These were semi-structured, in-depth interviews, as this format assists in establishing rapport and allows exploration of the complexities of relationship development and networking processes (Burns & Bush 2006; Neuman 2006). The interviews, lasting between 45 and 60 minutes, were conversational in style and questions were used only as needed to guide the discussion with a different order of discussion for each interview the result.

The interviews included a discussion of the nature/role/history of the individual’s social, and in particular, professional networks as well as consideration of the network(s) of his/her organisation. Explicit examples of overlaps between professional and organisational networks and vice versa and assessment of value emerging were sought, as well as descriptions of their networking processes. A portfolio of photographs illustrating the different phases of a networking event was then presented (as suggested by Harper 2002). This process, known as “photo elicitation”, assisted participants to recall and share the experiences and interactions that they had during the networking event at which they were observed (for focal participants). With informant consent, interviews were recorded and professionally transcribed in a consistent format, to enable lexicographic analysis. The transcripts were then checked for accuracy by reading through each interview while listening to the respective audio. Once accuracy had been confirmed, analysis began.
4.3.1 Conceptual and Relational Analysis Using Leximancer

The transcripts were analysed using Leximancer, a software analysis tool that is gaining increased recognition in academic literature (Young, Wilkinson & Smith 2015). This tool detects and codes key concepts based on the way that words (directly and indirectly) travel together by analysing large volumes of text in a systemic way (Smith & Humphreys 2006). ‘The basic assumption of this form of semantic analysis is that there is an underlying meaning and structure in the way we write’ (Young, Wilkinson & Smith 2015 p. 213). Similar logic applies to spoken discourse (Evers, Marroun & Young forthcoming).

This approach overcomes some of the main challenges with content analysis in that human coding is often problematic when it comes to confirming the validity and reliability of the codes. Gephart (2004) and others argue that computer-aided textual analysis allows for systematic and comprehensive coding. The content analysis software used for this analysis, Leximancer, adds reliability by using machine learning rather than the researcher’s interpretations to generate and apply coding to the text of the interview (Leximancer 2011).

Leximancer performs both conceptual and relational content analysis by categorising and coding the text based on explicit rules (Krippendorff 2004). Conceptual analysis, the most common form of content analysis, involves the detection of explicit and implicit concepts in the text. A key function of Leximancer is the dictionary of terms that it automatically detects and extracts for each document set (Leximancer 2011).

Relational analysis measures the relationships between concepts. Leximancer measures the co-occurrence of concepts found within the text, automatically extracts this information, and represents the information visually for comparison (Leximancer 2011). ‘The process is deterministic and results in an explicit and reproducible coding that reflects the semantics and interrelationships present in the text’ (Young, Wilkinson & Smith 2015 p. 113). Leximancer uses the thesaurus produced for each concept to code the text so that two sentence blocks of text (the default) reflecting concepts are identified. The co-occurrences of concepts are also computed and there is readily accessible linkage to the original text via a browser. This facilitates interpretation of meaning and allows the focus on particular research problems and
relevant text. The analysis results in a summary concept map depicting the importance, relative location of and strong links between concepts, and output includes the metrics that underpin the map.

The Leximancer analysis for this study was conducted in two phases. First, an overarching summary of the reflections of event attendance was done. As part of this an analysis of the nature of the contributions of the interviewer and informant to the total discourse was undertaken. This is presented in Section 4.3.4. This was followed by analysis that focused on the behavioural settings, as per environmental psychology (Barker 1968) within the informants’ networking event. This involved the inclusion of additional concepts that operationalize behaviour as a process occurring through time. This analysis is presented in Section 4.3.5.

4.3.2 Overview of Leximancer Analysis

The following section presents the editing and cleaning process used to arrive at a clear and parsimonious map. This is done by first presenting the initial map to show the unedited map (Figure 4.13) or “discovery” map. A process of editing was then undertaken. This is common in Leximancer analysis and involves examining the text associated with concepts that appear very similar and those that appear to have no semantic meaning using the browser. Decisions are made on a case-by-case basis to what editing needs to be done, specifically merging and removing concepts (or not), to clarify and simplify the map. The “benchmark” map that resulted from this process is then presented (Figure 4.14) and its content is described and interpreted to provide an overview of the interviews.

Also included is an assessment of the interview dynamics, specifically analysis of the content provided by the interviewer/facilitator versus the interviewees. This analysis goes on to consider the content of discussion about event attendance. This analysis includes adding concepts that allow the process of event behaviour through the phases of the event to examined and compared.
4.3.3 Initial Leximancer Analysis

In the first stage, the 30 in-depth interview transcripts were analysed to generate a summary/overview of the discussions that took place during the interviews and ascertain if editing of the concepts that emerge would assist in clarifying that content. This initial map (Figure 4.13) presents the broad themes emerging and the concepts within them.

Themes are “clusters” of interconnected concepts that are illustrated in the map as balloons. Each is a different colour and is labelled (in bold lower case) with the theme name representing the most prominent concept within it. Concepts are shown in Figure 4.13 as spots. Each concept spot is named for the most prominent word within them and so labelled. The spots vary in size with larger spots indicating larger amounts of co-occurrence, i.e. indicating that the text that is coded as that concept is also coded as other concepts.

‘Concepts are made up of words that are interconnected either because they occur together within two sentence text blocks and/or occur with similar words’ (Young, Wilkinson & Smith 2015 p. 113). The words that make up a concept indicate their nature and their position relative to each other reflect the nature of a theme and of the discourse as a whole. The nature of the discourse is further indicated by the lines that connect concepts; these indicate which concepts are most strongly linked in terms of the similarity of words that make them up and the amount of text that is coded as both of them. Similarity of concepts is also indicated by proximity; similar concepts tend to be positioned closer together – however this is only an approximation as the map compresses a multi-dimensional space into a two-dimensional representation (as occurs in quantitative mapping methods such as multi-dimensional scaling).
As previously discussed, Figure 4.13 is the initial map generated using default settings in Leximancer. The concepts found in Figure 4.13, and their frequency and relativity, are presented in Appendix 11 because this figure is only intended as a point of comparison for the edited, benchmark map that follows. This avoids repetition; the maps are virtually identical in that they contain very similar themes, concepts and relationships. Editing was very limited, it only involved merging similar concepts (e.g. Event and Events; see Appendix 12) and removing concepts with no semantic meaning (e.g. Stuff and Things; see Appendix 13). As already indicated, the browser was used to ensure the merging and removing of concepts
reflected the way informants expressed themselves. The edited version of Figure 4.13 is presented as Figure 4.14.

4.3.4 The "Benchmark Map"

This “benchmark map” is presented in Figure 4.14, along with a shortened version of the ranked concept list. This shows the concepts ordered according to the number of blocks of text that have been coded as that concept. One further change was made in producing the benchmark map. In Figure “speaker tags” have been added. These are quasi-concepts that “tag” or code all includes the text spoken by each actor). They appear in Figure 4.14 in the top left for the Facilitator and the bottom right for the Interviewee. This changes the structure of coding of the interviews to a limited degree as they replace the name-like concepts of interviewee and facilitators that appear in Figure 4.13. They represent slightly different things. Name-like concepts indicate the nature of the text surrounding each naming of who is speaking in the interview transcripts. In long speeches the text later in the speech will be less important than that which immediately follows the speaker label.

In contrast, speaker tags are calculated by considering all the text that is attributed to that speaker. The tags can be envisaged as “pseudo concepts” that both represent the position of the entire discourse of each participant and places this relative to the other concepts. This approach is preferable here, as analysis is primarily concerned with the conceptual and relational content of the discourse and this not obscured by themes and concepts that are primarily concerned with who is speaking. The speaker tags do allow comparison of who said what which allows assessment of the quality and differences of the facilitator and interviewee. Both are discussed in the following sections.
### Figure 4.14  Summary Analysis of Interview Transcript

#### Ranked Concept List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker Tags</th>
<th></th>
<th>Relativity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee</td>
<td>7091</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>2826</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word-like Concepts</th>
<th></th>
<th>Relativity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td>1160</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>940</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>609</td>
<td>09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network</td>
<td>568</td>
<td>08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look</td>
<td>509</td>
<td>07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>469</td>
<td>07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Down</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>02%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An initial comparison of the map indicates they have quite different thematic structures. When the speaker tags were added and concepts removed/merged, the number of themes and labels for the themes, changed. However, the obvious differences are misleading and the differences are actually quite slight.

As previously noted, themes are labelled as the most prominent concept within them. As the words “facilitator” and “interviewee” appeared frequently in the transcripts, concepts formed around them. These were prominent and so each was contained within a theme named for it. However, the removal of the name concepts facilitator and interviewee meant those themes were now named to reflect the now most prominent concepts within them. These labels reflect prominent themes that were in Figure 4.13. In addition, the theme and concept disappeared. This is because examination of the discourse showed that it was a frequently used term that did not contain semantic context (e.g. an informant would often say “sure thing” or “for sure” fairly indiscriminately). Therefore, there is one less concept in Figure 4.14 than in 4.13.

The removal of the two name-like concepts has also resulted in the themes being reorganised to some degree. The concepts are “pulled” towards the speaker tags to a greater degree than they were towards the name-like concepts for the reasons already discussed. This leads to a space in the middle of 4.14 that was not present in 4.13. However the basic structure of the map is virtually the same. The same concepts are present and are connected in the same pattern. However the theme representation in 4.14 more clearly shows that different types of concepts were part of the interviewees’ discourse than was the case for the facilitator. (And it should be noted that the themes are primarily a visualization feature in Leximancer than can be altered by the analyst.)

**Comparative Analysis of the Interview Participants' Contribution**

As already noted, analysis of the position of the speaker tags is concerned with assessing the nature of each parties’ contribution to the interview. The tags’ proximity to concepts and the lines indicating the strongest connections provide insight as to what the conceptual contribution of each participant was and how it differed. This is discussed further below.
It is also possible to ascertain the participants’ relative contributions. The concept list included in Figure 4.14 shows the discourse of interviewees consists of 7091 two-sentence blocks of text, while the discourse of the facilitator was 2826 blocks of text. These frequencies show that the facilitator was a fairly active participant in the interview but contributed substantially less than the interviewees. The relevance score shows that facilitator text contained about 40% as many sentences the interviewees. This proportion is indicative of the conversational style used in the interviews, rather than a traditionally interrogative style.

To compare the nature of each type of participant’s discourse, co-occurrence analysis of the concepts was undertaken. This shows the association of the concepts and tags, i.e. amount of text that coded as both a particular concept and tag and allows an assessment of the frequently appearing concepts for each participant, and comparison as to which are idiosyncratic to one of the speakers and where they are similar for both. Table 4.4 shows the top 10 concepts associated with each of the tags (i.e. those where there is the largest overlap of coded text between a concept and speaker tag).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee Co-occurrence</th>
<th>Facilitator Co-occurrence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>opportunity</td>
<td>event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>group</td>
<td>attend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>working</td>
<td>value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conversation</td>
<td>network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whole</td>
<td>professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meet</td>
<td>cards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>months</td>
<td>interested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speak</td>
<td>networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>day</td>
<td>personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doing</td>
<td>organisation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An in-depth analysis of these differences is not the purpose. However, it is worth noting that the concepts that co-occur most frequently with the interviewee are completely different than those that co-occur with the facilitator. The reasons for this and their implications are discussed in the subsequent analysis, where the process of networking throughout the whole event is considered.
Content and Relational Analysis of the Benchmark Map

The main focus of the initial analysis was concerned with the broad structure of the map, including consideration of the nature of the themes and the overall patterns of the concepts. The number of themes can be varied by the analyst to allow more generalised or more fine-grained grouping of the concepts. Using a 50% theme size setting, which allows a medium level granularity, showed five themes emerging. These are in the diagram in Figure 4.14: **Event** (green), **Network** (blue), **Look** (brown), **Business** (pink) and **Doing** (purple) (bold italics are used hereafter for the names of themes). The themes clearly separate into two groups, with **Event** and **Network** closest to the Facilitator tag (italics are used hereafter to indicate the names of concepts and for tags) at the top of the map and the other three themes closest to the Interviewee tag. These proximities indicate that the facilitator’s speech was more likely to contain text coded as the concepts in the **Event** and **Network** themes and the interviewee’s to contain concepts coded as **Business**, **Look** and **Doing**. The distance between the tags further indicates that the facilitator’s discourse was conceptually different from the interviewee’s.

A comparative analysis of the content of each theme does not emerge from the Leximancer output. This was undertaken by considering the position (in the map) and connections between concepts (indicated by the pattern of lines between them) within each theme. The concepts’ nature was explored and compared by looking at the words contained within their thesauruses, and by looking at examples of text coded as the concept within the browser. The concepts in the **Event** theme – *event, attend, networking, started* and *interested* – are concerned with the how and why of attending the events. The concepts within this theme are the most tightly clustered – that is, they are proximate to one another with strong connections, indicating that these are the most closely related and were fairly consistently discussed together during the interview. The concepts in the **Network** theme are concerned both with the nature of professional and personal networks and the value to the organisation of particular (indicated by example) networks. The proximity of the **Network** and **Event** themes and the position of the concept *value* indicate that *value* is also discussed in conjunction with *networking* at particular *events*. The concepts in **Business** are about the particular activities that happen at events – people *talk, meet* a particular *person* or *someone* they were introduced to, exchange *cards*, or *meet* someone seated at their
Table (as discussed, often events include meals and seating is around tables). The **Look** theme is concerned with the strategic elements of attending events (i.e. why people attend); informants look for benefits by starting *relationships*, making *contact* with *different* people in *industry*. They emphasise that this is *work* for them (i.e. it requires effort).

The **Look** theme is most concerned with reflections of what participants did at the event they recently attended – they *speak* to people, move around the *room*, join *groups* of people, seek *opportunities*, get their *name* out there. The pattern of links in the **Doing** theme, with the concept links radiating out from the *Interviewee* tag, are not very connected to each other and indicate that these are talked about in turn rather than collectively. These concepts are most associated with the photo elicitation phase of the interview, where informants comment on the activities depicted in photos they are shown in turn. Overall the map reflects the nature of the interviews and the way they were structured. It also highlights that in informants’ minds the activities of event attendance are directly associated with “networking” as an end to itself, but not to as great a degree as anticipated. Informants instead consider their goals, establish *relationships* and *contacts* and indicate they seek these (*look*) at *events*. However, they do not strongly associate these activities with *events*, *networking* and building *networks* in their discourse.

The data table in Figure 4.14 shows the frequency of concept co-occurrence. The most frequently appearing concepts are the speaker tags *Facilitator* and *Interviewee* with, as mentioned, 2826 and 7091 two-sentence blocks of text respectively associated with each. (Inspection of the transcripts shows that the facilitator used shorter, simpler sentences and interviewees used long, less structured sentences, influencing the counting of the number of text blocks.) The 23 most frequently occurring word-like concepts are listed in the data table, with the most frequent concept in each of the five themes highlighted. The nine most frequently occurring concepts are concerned with *networking* (609 coded as this concept), a particular *event* (1160), the continuing *network* (568) including its *professional* (321) elements that are built upon and the activities of (doing) *business* (940), *talking* (607) to *someone* (422), the *time* (469) involved and exploring events, that is, having a *look* (509).
4.3.5 Behavioural Episodes in the Event Attendance Process

What doesn’t emerge from the map and concept list of Figure 4.14 is a sense of the process; that is, the behavioural settings/episodes that occur through time and characterise event networking. To explore this, user-defined concepts (UDCs) were generated for further lexicographic analysis. In this form of analysis, additional concepts are sought in the text, whereby words that represent an important concept that the researcher wishes to focus on form the seed of a “new” concept. The concept is likely to already exist but cannot be visualised because these words are instead contained in other, more general concepts (Leximancer 2011). It is important to note that Leximancer does not create links, connections or relationships where they don’t exist in the data. However, if there is sufficient conceptual connection an additional concept is created, and positioned in the map according to its “relatedness” to the existing concepts.

In line with the literature of behaviour episodes/settings presented in Chapter 2, UDCs of the networking process were conceptualised as five concepts. Three of these represented the networking phases: preparation for the event, behaviour during the event and follow-up behaviour. In addition, a concept conceptualising the physical environment of during-event behaviour was added (in line with the theories of environmental psychology) as was a concept to represent the value sought and achieved from networking and event attendance, as no concept related specifically to outcomes generally or value specifically. Each of these five concepts was “seeded” with related words (based on the literature review and face validity). For pre-networking_considerations the seed words included expect, invite, list, preparation, prior and research. For during-networking_behaviour the seed words were approach, introduce, socialise, standing, walk, selling and networking. For (during event) networking_environment the seed words were drinks, outside, speaker, room, hotel and table; for post-networking_followup they were call, meeting, database, email, refer, ring and contact. And for networking_value the seed words related to value gained (as opposed to synonyms of the word value) and included active, advice, brand, connect, contacts, referral and trust.

The analysis was conducted in two phases. First, an analysis was run separately for each UDC and its nature and position in the Figure 4.14 map checked. This enabled
the researcher to ascertain that the hypothesised concept existed and that it was related to the existing concepts in the ways anticipated. As the five concepts were all viable and positioned similarly to the theoretically derived expectations, the five UDCs were then included together in the analysis. This showed that the *during-networking Behaviour* concept was over-connected to the other concepts. Essentially, the concept was so large that it dominated the map. This diminished its discriminatory and thus explanatory power. To overcome this problem the concept was split in two, with the activities (verbs) of *during-network behaviour* in one concept (approach, chat, dealing, exchange, exchanging, giving, introduce, introduced, listening, look, looking, meet, networking, saying, selling, sit, sitting, socialise, speaking, spoke, stand, standing, stay, talking, thinking, touch, walk and working) and the objects and states associated with the event behaviour (nouns) in another (card, cards, conversation, conversations, deal, discussion, meeting, social, talk, work). This is consistent with behaviour setting frameworks (as discussed when considering environmental psychology). It is also consistent with theories of event structure and sequencing and its analysis that differentiate event processes and structure in this way (Abbott 2001, Bairstow & Young 2012).

Figure 4.15 presents the resulting six concepts within the conceptual map that was presented in Figure 4.14. In Figure 4.15, despite using the same default setting, while the same themes emerge the size and composition of the theme circles, which represent the connectedness of groups of concepts, have altered somewhat to include these UDCs. The theme changes are due to the greater connectedness between concepts as a result of the inclusion of these UDC concepts; that is, the nature and quantity of connectedness has changed, bringing the themes closer together, as is observed in Figure 4.15. This does not alter the frequency or position of the original concepts which, as already noted, are not altered by UDC inclusion. (There are slight differences in concept positions in the two figures but this is because random seeds are used to generate the map, with slight variations inevitably the result. As mentioned, all other parts of Leximancer’s data processing and analysis are deterministic.)
Figure 4.15  Map of All User-defined Concepts (UDCs) with Speaker Tags

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept label</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Relativity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>during-networking_behaviour VERB</td>
<td>2440</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>networking_value</td>
<td>1913</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>during-networking_behaviour NOUN</td>
<td>1181</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>event</td>
<td>1160</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>business</td>
<td>940</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>networking_environment</td>
<td>781</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>networking</td>
<td>609</td>
<td>09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>talk</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>network</td>
<td>568</td>
<td>08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>look</td>
<td>509</td>
<td>07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time</td>
<td>469</td>
<td>07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>someone</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>post-networking_followup</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>different</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>person</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doing</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pre-networking_considerations</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>03%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The inclusion of additional concepts into the analysis results in additional explanatory power in the diagram part (left) of Figure 4.15. The additional (UDC) concepts are positioned in four of the five themes. Pre-networking (i.e. preparing for the event) is within the blue theme circle, which includes concepts relating to the event, attend(ing) it, (being) interested (in an event) and networking at it. The pre-networking UDC is not as strongly connected to the speaker_facilitator tag as are the other UDCs. This is evidenced by the greater number of linkages from speaker_facilitator tag to pre-networking_considerations then are the case with other UDCs. (The path that connects these two is speaker_facilitator to event, event to networking, networking to pre-networking_considerations).

The pink theme below the blue theme circle fills the vacant space that was in the centre of the map in Figure 4.14. It includes the periphery of what was the Business theme in Figure 4.14 but primarily the theme functions to link concepts to its central concept, during-networking behaviour VERB. This is the hub of a large number of varied concepts; that is, it links the activities that occur at an event such as wanted, talk, look, saying, working and met. It is also linked to the concept networking and thus to the blue theme circle. This theme also includes the UDC networking_environment. Networking_environment is closely linked to the physical environment via the concept table (i.e. where one sits and thus who one is proximate to and able to network with for much of the event), and is proximate to whole and room. The networking_environment concept isn’t as strong as some of the other UDCs. This, is asserted, based on the proximity of the concept to the speaker_Facilitator tag. (The path that connects these two is speaker_Facilitator tag to event, event to during_networking_behaviour VERB, during_networking_behaviour VERB to networking_environment.). This path indicates that environment impacted on during networking behaviour. The networking_environment concept’s lack of prominence is further indicated by it being one of the most distant concepts in the map. That is the other UDCs are connected to a speaker either directly by a single link or two links at most whereas this concept is connected via three links.

During_networking_behaviour NOUN is in the brown theme circle, which combines the Business and Look themes of Figure 4.13 and includes part of that figure’s Doing theme. During_networking_behaviour NOUN is connected to concepts such
as business, work and opportunity and to the event artefact, cards. The fourth theme, green circle, contains the cluster of concepts network, professional and personal and the UDCs of networking value and post-networking activities. Networking_value is linked to social structure delimiters such as contact, social, industry and network. The concept contact links networking value and post-networking activities. The fifth theme, the purple circle includes most of Figure 4.14’s Doing theme concepts. In Figure 4.15 the theme includes the general behaviour concept speak and the nouns group, conversation, room, name and time. These are linked to Speaker_interviewee but not to the UDC during_networking_behaviour NOUN as the researcher anticipated. This is probably because the discourse coded as these concepts primarily comes from the photo elicitation phase of the interviews.

The position of networking_value in relation to the other concepts shows it is linked to post-networking_followup via contact. This indicates that contacts are at the heart of networking activities and are a key element of it. Networking_value is also close and linked to industry and social, indicating that these too are sources and/or recipients of the value emulating from networking. Also directly linked to networking_value is network (linked to both professional and personal but with the stronger link to professional), indicating that one’s networks are the sources and/or recipients of networking_value. These associations emerge from the discourse of the informants as networking_value is directly linked to the discourse of the interviewees (Speaker_interviewee), and is not linked to the facilitator (Speaker_facilitator), as shown by the direct link (grey line) between the concepts.

This map provides further insight into the roles played by both of the interview participants in the interviews. As mentioned, the concepts close and/or strongly linked to each tag indicate something of the focus of that participant’s discourse. Speaker_facilitator is, as before, linked to event and value (but the latter, although in the same theme and reasonably proximate, is not directly linked to networking_value and its concepts). Speaker_facilitator is only linked to the networking process concepts indirectly – through event and networking to pre and during-networking behaviour VERB and through this to networking_environment. Speaker_facilitator and these networking process concepts are not linked to post-networking behaviour and networking value. Speaker_interviewee is linked directly to during-networking behaviour NOUN and networking_value as well as to a mixed set of concepts to the
left of the tag. To summarise, interviewees focus more on the tangible elements of events and of the value that is obtained and focus less on the behaviours and activities that occur at events.

The different configuration of concepts around each tag provides further information about the interviews. The set of concepts adjacent to Facilitator is tightly connected, which indicates conceptual consistency across the interviews. This is in part because there was a single interviewer using a guide. In contrast, the concepts linked to Interviewee are greater in number, more disparate and therefore are less tightly connected. This in part reflects that the discourse of interviewees originated from 30 different individuals who had differing reflections to share.

The ranked concept list presented in Figure 4.15 further highlights the centrality and importance of the additional concepts. Thirty-four per cent of interview text is coded as the actions of networking (networking_behaviour VERB), 16% of the text is concerned with the social structures and objects (networking_behaviour NOUN) that surround these actions and 11% is coded as the physical networking_environment. Twenty-seven per cent of text is coded as networking_value. The pre- and post-networking considerations (with 3% and 6% of text so coded) are less prominent but are still among the 20 most frequently occurring concepts, and there are considerable amounts of the text coded as these concepts. This, in combination with the positions of these concepts in the Figure 4.14 map, shows that embedded in the discourse of the facilitator and interviewees is at least implicit awareness and consideration of the process of behaviour and behaviour settings that characterise event networking.

Another way of considering the nature of the UDCs is by examples of discourse coded as each. Table 4.5 indicates several examples of each UDC’s discourse, shows the demographics of the interviewee and for the first three provides the question from the facilitator. These quotes were selected because they both represented the indicated concept particularly well and illustrated a particularly insightful moment in the interview.
### Table 4.5 Examples of User-defined Concepts (UDCs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept Name</th>
<th>Exemplar Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Pre-networking considerations            | **Facilitator:** Prior to going along to a networking function are there any considerations that you give prior to attending? Do you do anything or request any information?  
**Older Male Interviewee:** I always try and have a bit of a flick through the guest list. I am hopeless with names to be honest. It’s good to flick through the guest list and try and just see who is going to be in the room so that when you walk in, those names are there in the forefront of your mind…. I will often just read the paper and pick out something topical even if it’s an obscure article just to have something in my mind when I walk into the room to have a conversation with people about. |
| During_networking behaviour VERB         | **Facilitator:** This photo was taken during the networking portion of the event. Can you comment on what is happening in the photo? What are you doing?  
**Older Female Interviewee:** I was looking at her thinking, you remind me of my friend, and listening to what she was saying and that sort of thing. I've got to learn to relax my face [laughs]. Yeah, at this stage, I was trying to find out as much information- just her background; where she's come from; what she does; what she's doing; who's she selling to; the areas; what she's responsible for, I guess. |
| Networking_ environment                  | **Facilitator:** So in terms of looking at behaviour in a networking environment, can you comment a bit about your own behaviour in reflecting on it?  
**Older Male Interviewee:** I always find the event here (lobby of hotel) to be difficult. Because there’s so many people and the environment is so narrow, so it’s actually really hard to network. Because if you’re at this far end it’s actually quite difficult to work your way through and actually find ways to connect with people because you’re all kind of squished in. So when you’re squished in and you’re worried about waiters and waitresses coming through, then what happens is as a group you bundle in even tighter. So to attempt to get into a group like that you really need to be able to almost put your hand on the shoulder of someone and say hey, so let me in. Introduce me to all your wonderful friends. |
| Networking_value                         | **Older Male Interviewee:** So I think that's the power of networking, is - I feel, for me, that's how I'm trying to utilise the networks. You can't go along to a networking event and expect you'll get a business card, you'll contact that person and they'll engage you to do work. It doesn't happen that way. So if you're networking you've got to recognise you're in for the long haul.  
**Younger Female Interviewee:** I often use networking events as an opportunity to take a guest with me because I want to host them and make them feel special and its part of developing a relationship with them or I think they'll get a lot of value out of meeting people
The discourse in Table 4.5 put a more human face on to the processes of networking and also shows in a more concrete way the activities and goals of networking. While the quotes associated with each of the UDCs are insightful, the networking value concept is particularly interesting for several reasons. First it reflects a diverse set of ideas, for example the first quote from the Older Male emphasises value emerging from a long term perspective. In contrast the second quote from the Younger Female who talks about the value that comes from sharing experiences with other attendees and providing networking value to others. These are not incompatible views but they do illustrate different aspects of the rich concept that is value.

Another interesting insight to emerge is the way in which informants talk about the pre-networking considerations and post-networking follow-up activities. Informants discuss the type of strategic thinking and activities that they engage in both before and after their attendance at an event. With respect to their behaviours prior to attending an event, attendees are not only considering who they want to talk to at the
event i.e. checking list of attendees, but also what they might want to talk about i.e. topics of conversation. After their attendance at events, most informants tend to sort through the business cards collected and reach out to their new contacts (whom they see as being of potential value) via different modes of communication for example, social networking sites, email and/or phone.

4.3.6 Discussion of Interview Results

The findings emerging from this analysis provide new insights into event networking practices and processes. The social and physical environments of networking combine with at-event activities to produce outcomes. More specifically the findings indicate:

- That value is considered by both facilitator and interviewee but in different terms. The interviewee considers it in terms of networking and what value emerges from this, with concepts such as network (both personal and professional), contact and follow up being the focus. The facilitator considers it more generically and also considers the value that flows to the organisation.
- Some but not all elements of the physical and social environment are associated with networking value.
- Other elements of the physical and social environment of the event are associated with networking behaviour.
- Networking behaviour is less associated with networking value than anticipated.
- The researcher/facilitator and interviewees conceptualise event behaviour in different ways.

These findings emerge from combing a structured lexicographic/semantic with theoretically informed interpretation. This approach to analysis is particularly useful for this research problem. This automated lexicographic analysis provides a useful and reliable summary of informants’ reflections and provides insights into the deeper processes that are operating, which are further informed by the literature of behaviour setting. Furthermore, the lexicographic method enables some assessment of the interviewer effect – an ongoing issue in assessing the quality of qualitative work (Turner 2010). Here, consideration of the overall conceptual structure in Figure 4.14 and Figure 4.15 shows that interviewees have a quite different conceptual
structure within their discourse than the facilitator. The speaker tags are positioned about 180 degrees apart on the maps and have entirely different concepts associated with them, and these concepts are not substantially connected.

This is confirmed by co-occurrence analysis which shows that the concepts that most frequently appear in each party’s discourse are far from identical. In interviewees’ discourse the most frequent concepts are opportunity, group, working, conversation and meet and in the facilitator’s they are event, attend, value, network and professional. This tells us that (i) there is some difference such that the interviewees were not excessively influenced by the facilitator during the interview and thus we can give greater credence to the validity of their reflections; and (ii) there is some similarity in that the concepts have, on the face of it, some overlap – for example, both see positives in events. However, interviewees appear to be framing event activities in terms of future potential with concepts such as opportunity, conversation and meet, despite the facilitator’s focus on actual outcomes with concepts like value, attend, professional and network.

4.4 Survey Analysis

To enable triangulation and further validation of the interviews and observation findings, analysis was undertaken of data collected from a short survey which questioned respondents about their networks and networking behaviour (Marroun, Toufani & Young 2013). As discussed in Chapter 3, the survey was able to capture a snapshot of a larger sample of professional networkers and thus able to explore the representativeness of the focal observations of those observed. Although the survey was intended to be a confirmatory/validating tool which enabled the focal participants to be compared to the wider community of networkers, additional insights emerged that furthered the understanding of the processes at work, particularly in terms of macro-level influencers such as which industries are more likely to employ network attendees.

However, it should be again noted that the sample is one of convenience. This survey was administered at one of the events where observations were conducted and was also made available for interested WSBC members to complete online.
The focus of this survey is on the behaviours of business professionals attending networking events. In line with theoretical perspectives discussed in Section 2.3, the survey instrument operationalizes networking behaviour as a process where past experiences influence current behaviours. The individual items that are the focus of this analysis are presented in Table 4.6. As indicated in the first column, these are concerned with the networking process through time. Some survey items were answered using a six-point Likert-type scale (6 = “describes well” to 1 = “describes poorly”) while other items were multiple response questions; that is, to select as many of the following as apply.

Based on theories of networking and process presented in Section 2.4, these items have been grouped into three processes-related constructs which address the nature of respondents’ approach to networking and organise their behaviour according to whether it occurred before, during and after attending networking events. The efficacy of the typology was verified using Crombach’s alpha. All groupings were internally consistent as indicated by alphas of .60 or greater. However, the items within the nature of networking constructs have not been combined into indices. Instead, the more specific character of each item is explored in the following analysis.

Table 4.6 Construct and Item Description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area Name</th>
<th>Construct No.</th>
<th>Construct Name</th>
<th>Item No.</th>
<th>Ques. No.</th>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>Scale Nature</th>
<th>Mean / Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nature of Networking</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Approach to Networking</td>
<td>V1</td>
<td>Q3.</td>
<td>Regularity of event attendance</td>
<td>6-point Likert</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 = Describes my networking well</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 = Describes my networking poorly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V2</td>
<td>Q3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Activeness on social networking sites</td>
<td>6-point Likert</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>As above</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V3</td>
<td>Q3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Identifying kinds of people to meet at events</td>
<td>6-point Likert</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>As above</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Name</td>
<td>Construct No.</td>
<td>Construct Name</td>
<td>Item No.</td>
<td>Ques. No.</td>
<td>Item Description</td>
<td>Scale Nature</td>
<td>Mean / Proportion</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
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<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Value of Networking Events</td>
<td>V1</td>
<td>Q4.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Events help in building a network</td>
<td>6-point Likert</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>V2 Q4.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Contacts made at networking events help the organisation</td>
<td>6-point Likert</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Goals When Attending an Event</td>
<td>V1</td>
<td>Q5B.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Get referrals</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>V2 Q5B.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Showcase expertise</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>V3 Q5B.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Generate leads</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>V4 Q5B.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>V5 Q5B.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Make and build relationships</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micro-level Behaviour</td>
<td>2.1 Pre-event Behaviour</td>
<td>V1 Q5A.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Look at list of attendees</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>V2 Q5A.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Develop strategies to meet particular people</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>V3 Q5A.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Look at seating arrangements and choose possible seat</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>V4 Q5A.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Look up topic/speaker</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>V5 Q5A.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Research event attendees</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>V6 Q5A.</td>
<td></td>
<td>No preparation</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 During-event Behaviour</td>
<td>V1</td>
<td>Q6A.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Approach large groups</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>V2 Q6A.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Approach small groups or people standing alone</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>V3 Q6A.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Try to meet new people</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>V4 Q6A.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Talk to people you know</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>V5 Q6A.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ask for business cards</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>V6 Q6A.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hand out business cards</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Post-event Behaviour</td>
<td>V1</td>
<td>Q7.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sort through business cards</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>V2 Q7.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Call new contacts</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>V3 Q7.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Add contacts to online social networking site</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>V4 Q7.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Send emails to</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following sections consider each portion of Table 4.6 in turn before considering the overall pattern of results.

### 4.4.1 Nature of Networking

In line with the theories of networking described in Section 2.4.3 and the process based typology used to classify the phases of networking behaviour and the wider context in which they sit are presented below and in the following sections. As previously discussed, the overarching proposition is that the nature of networking — that is, the way in which business professionals approach their networking activities, the value that they receive from them as well as the goals they have when attending networking events influence and/or influenced by the networking behaviours they use. These are presented in Table 4.6.

The perceived value and the nature and/or frequency of networking behaviour mix was measured to enable comparison of the attitudes and behaviours of the observation/depth interview participants (discussed in Sections 4.2 and 4.3) to be compared to the patterns of the wider business community. The final column of Table 4.6 shows the mean use of a range of networking approaches and attitudes. There is somewhat regular use of these as indicates to the value of networking have means of 4.2 to 4.6 (scale midpoint is 3.5) indicating modest agreement/. The exception is use of social networking, which has a mean below the midpoint (3.2). The goals of event networking are generally directed towards business building; 65% attended to generate leads and about a third of respondents indicated that they do so to get contacts and showcase capabilities. This is in contrast to more long-term or general goals, with less than 20% indicating a goal is to learn or build relationships. This is in line with general pattern of observations of research participants’ and behaviour and their subsequent discussions of this.

Table 4.6 shows that the frequency of behaviours associated with preparation for events is not substantial. Primarily, attendees check to see who is attending (75%),

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area Name</th>
<th>Construct No.</th>
<th>Construct Name</th>
<th>Item No.</th>
<th>Ques. No.</th>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>Scale Nature</th>
<th>Mean / Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>new contacts</td>
<td>V5</td>
<td>Q7.</td>
<td>Meet with new</td>
<td>choice</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>contacts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
with a smaller number of people (34% and 35%) indicating they plan various ways to meet people of interest. However, proactive at-event behaviour is the norm: meeting people and talking to previous acquaintances, approaching small groups of people and handing out business cards were each undertaken by more than 60% of respondents. There is also a certain amount of follow up after events; in particular respondents’ reported reviewing the business cards collected (60%) and sending follow-up emails to useful contacts (67%).

To allow a more nuanced comparison of the individuals participating in the qualitative research to the wider community of networking the general propositions that the nature of networking (approach, goals, value) is influenced by personal context factors, such as age, gender, experience and type of industry in which they are employed are tested. Chi-square was used to test the associations of these and are presented in Table 4.7. For industry worked in, a manual examination of the tabulation was undertaken to see if certain industries were more inclined towards a particular response or responses (small cell sizes made it impossible to statistically test this). The results are presented in their entirety as this allows better visualisation of the overall patterns of results.

The significant and indicative associations are shown in Table 4.7. Overall, this shows that only job experiences i.e. number of years in the work force influenced approach to networking, perceived value and goals. Also emerging were strong indications that industry context influenced all three factors to at least a limited degree (this could not be statistically tested). The number of years in the workforce (which must reflect age of respondent to some degree) influenced some but not all behaviours. in particular “less experienced” respondents are more likely to undertake online networking and more experienced respondents are more likely to use events to generate leads and build relationships. The only other significant relationship that emerged was that females were more likely to use events to showcase expertise. Attendees from certain industry sectors (as detailed in Table 4.7) were more likely to regularly attend events and to use events to get referrals, learn, generate leads and build relationships. (A comparison of these findings with those derived from the observation will be presented in Section 4.5.6).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Demographic Variable /Items</th>
<th>No. of Events Attended in the Last 12 Months</th>
<th>No. of Years in the Workforce</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Nature of Association for Industry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1.1 Approach to Networking        | V1  
Regularity of event attendance | Rejected                                   | Rejected                      | Rejected | Not tested | Respondents in the Media and Communication, Law and IT industries regularly attend networking events |
|                                   | V2  
Active on social networking sites | Rejected                                   | Accepted: Negative            | Rejected | Rejected |                                   |
|                                   | V3  
Identifying people to meet at events | Rejected                                   | Rejected                      | Rejected | Not tested |                                   |
| 1.2 Value of Networking Events    | V1  
Events help in building a network | Rejected                                   | Rejected                      | Rejected | Not tested |                                   |
|                                   | V2  
Contacts made at networking events help the organisation | Rejected                                   | Rejected                      | Rejected | Not tested |                                   |
| 1.3 Goals When Attending an Event | V1  
Get referrals | Rejected                                   | Rejected                      | Rejected | Not tested | Those respondents in the Banking and Finance as well as the Hospitality industry do attend networking events with the goal of generating referrals |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Demographic Variable /Items</th>
<th>No. of Events Attended in the Last 12 Months</th>
<th>No. of Years in the Workforce</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Nature of Association for Industry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V2 Showcase expertise</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
<td>Not tested</td>
<td>Accepted: Positive</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
<td></td>
<td>Greater proportion of female respondents have the goal of generating leads prior to attending a networking event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V3 Generate leads</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
<td>Accepted: Positive</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
<td>Not tested</td>
<td></td>
<td>Those respondents in Education and Media and Communication industries attend networking events with the goal of generating leads.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V4 Learning</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
<td>Not tested</td>
<td></td>
<td>Those respondents in the Law, Accounting, NFP and Charity and Hospitality industries share the goal of making and building relationships when attending networking events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V5 Make and build relationships</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
<td>Accepted: Positive</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
<td>Not tested</td>
<td></td>
<td>Those respondents in the Law, Accounting, NFP and Charity and Hospitality industries share the goal of making and building relationships when attending networking events.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was hoped that a similar consideration of the patterns of behaviour associated with networking approach, perceived value and goals could be undertaken. However, the sample size combined with the data available did not allow this. While cluster analysis was undertaken to ascertain portfolios of associated networking behaviour, it was not possible with the available data to ascertain any clear patterns about the nature of the respondents in each cluster. Without this meaningful comparison of the
survey findings with those emerging from the observations and follow up interviews was not possible. Therefore, the cluster analysis does not form part of this analysis and is presented in Appendix 14.

4.4.2 Discussion of Survey Results

While the primary purpose of the survey was for validation, the findings emerging from the survey analysis provided additional insights into event networking practices and processes. Relational elements (i.e. networking experience) and contextual norms (industry sector of respondent) appear to play some role in respondents’ views of networking and the way it is undertaken – in that it appears there is a greater propensity to regularly attend event in some industries than in others. A possible explanation is that regularity of attendance may be due to organisational support and this may be embedded in industry-level norms. The same explanation is plausible for the indications of certain industries’ greater than expected propensity to use events to achieve types of goals such as getting referrals, learning, building relationships and so on.

Associations of event behaviour with demographics were also computed (see Appendix 14 where the cluster analysis findings are presented). These findings are not statistically significant but also strongly indicate that in the event-related behaviour, (recent) history matters in that the number of events recently attended influences (and perhaps is influenced by) preparation for events, event behaviour and nature of follow up. Not surprisingly, greater preparation is associated with more attendance, possibly because experienced attendees are well aware of the value of preparing. More prepared people and females are likely to use card exchange as the primary event behaviour and the more prepared are somewhat more likely to use social media rather than more personalised follow-ups. There are no discernible patterns indicating that industry or years in the workforce play a role in the nature of event behaviour.

The findings regarding the perceived value of events (that were part of the “nature of network” group of items) were puzzling. Events were not seen to assist in building networks but were seen as valuable for building contacts. This may align with previous work on perceived network value. Wiley, Wilkinson and Young (2006)
found that networks were perceived as relatively unimportant to managers. They speculated that managers may have micro- and short-term perspectives that preclude them from perceiving the nature of their participation in networks and thus any resulting value. This may also apply to this context.

### 4.5 Comparative Analysis of Findings

This comparative analysis involves systematically considering each “pairing” of data; that is, the observation and the interviews, observation and survey and interviews and survey. Table 4.8 considers the overlap and differences in the findings emerging from each method. The table’s main diagonal shows both findings emerging from each method and comparisons between parts of each method, as appropriate. The remaining cells show the information that emerged from comparison of each pair of methods. The findings presented in Table 4.8 are expanded upon in the sections that follow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Observation Findings</th>
<th>Interview Findings</th>
<th>Survey Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Observation Findings</strong></td>
<td>Photos and observation notes are compared. They present complementary rather than different findings. Together they show demographics and environment impact on the nature of behaviour. Phases of the event impact on duration and nature of behaviour to a lesser degree.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interview Findings</strong></td>
<td>Methods showed different findings rather than convergence or divergence. Some differences in behaviour observed and reflected upon emerged; however, reasons for that behaviour generally were plausible and explanation for deviation was usually provided.</td>
<td>Overall, interviews provided rationale for observed behaviour and deeper understanding of observed activities. General questioning techniques provided background, general information. Photo elicitation provided more detailed information on behavioural rationale. The findings emerging from this analysis provided new insights into nature of event networking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Survey Findings</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation Findings</td>
<td>Interview Findings</td>
<td>Survey Findings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>practices, processes and value.</td>
<td>surveys, processes and value.</td>
<td>There are strong indications that in the event-related behaviour history matters (number of events attended influences preparation for events, event behaviour and nature of follow up). Different analytical techniques showed consistent patterns; i.e. differences by gender, differences by industry and no difference by years in the workforce. Nor are behaviours at different stages of networking (before, during, after) associated.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Survey Findings**

Findings diverge in that associations between age and behaviour are not supported in hypothesis testing. However, findings converge with respect to an association between gender and event behaviour. Confirms that there are some demographic differences via the hypothesis testing; however, not directly compatible with the demographic differences observed.

Findings diverge with respect to relationship between events and network building. Interviews show a strong relationship. Hypothesis testing revealed that events only helped to build contacts not networks.

4.5.1 Observation

Analysis of the observation notes and photographs together revealed that there are clear patterns in the behaviour of participants during networking events. This co-analysis was confirmatory in nature; that is, observation notes confirmed the emergent patterns in the photographs and vice versa. As was discussed in Sections 4.2.4–4.2.6, the three influential factors that determine the nature of participant behaviour at an event are demographics, event style and the phases of the event. As discussed, the influence of demographics on participant behaviour (i.e. gender and age) was related to the way in which participants interacted with others during the event. Younger event attendees were most likely to attach themselves to colleagues who were from the same organisation. This type of attachment behaviour was most prevalent in females, as distinct from male (and often older) attendees that tended to interact more with a number of different people during the networking time.

Likewise, the nature of the physical space and event style was shown by both forms of observational data to be a critical factor that influences the possibilities for and constraints to networking behaviour. For example, in a narrower, more constrained space, movement during the networking time was observed to be quite limited, thus impacting the intensity of the networking that was done. Similarly, and as expected,
participants behaved differently when the style of the event was stand up versus mostly a sit down event, with more diverse networking occurring at the former and more intense networking occurring at the latter. The final influencing factor of observed behaviour related to the stages of the event. In contrast to expectations, the networking behaviour itself was fairly similar across the event phases; although, attendees were more relaxed in later stage networking than was the case initially. However, this was infrequently observed as most attendees exited events after only a short time of networking following the middle phase of the event.

4.5.2 Interview

The general questioning provided insights into participants’ networking history, practices and motivations for attending events, as distinct from the photo elicitation component of the interview, which elicited participant reflections with regard to their behaviour during the event and their rationale for such behaviours. Not surprisingly, when informants viewed photos of themselves during the event (as was the case for about 60% of those interviewed) their reflections on their networking behaviour tended to be personal. When generic photos of networking behaviour were shown informants spoke less about themselves and more about the networking process. These two different perspectives provided a useful contrast; however, the reflections are quite consistent other than with respect to context. Interviewees appeared to frame the value of event activities in terms of the future potential that would come about as a result of them attending events.

The Leximancer analysis highlighted that the general questioning versus the photo elicitation were conceptually distinct. As discussed, the concepts emerging from the photo elicitation phase of the interviews were general behaviour description oriented. The more general questioning was associated with network process, specific networking behaviour and value. The activities of event attendance are directly associated with “networking” as an end to itself (as shown by proximities in the Leximancer map) but not to as great a degree as anticipated. Informants instead consider their goals, establishing relationships and contacts and indicate they seek these (look) at events. They emphasise that this is work for them (i.e. it requires effort). The findings suggest that networking behaviour is less directly associated with networking value than anticipated. Furthermore, interviewees consider value in
terms of networking activities and the benefits that emerge from this with concepts such as network (both personal and professional), contact and follow up being the focus.

4.5.3 Survey

The survey findings strongly indicate that in the event-related behaviour, (recent) history matters in that the number of events recently attended by participants influences (and perhaps is influenced by) the preparation for events, event behaviour and nature of follow up. Likewise, the gender of participants impacts on the during-event behaviour (but not on the preparation or follow-up behaviour). The number of years in workforce does not impact on the before-, during- and after-event behaviour; that is, there is no difference in number of years in the workforce by cluster membership. The findings regarding the perceived value of events (that were part of the “nature of network” group of items) were puzzling. Events were not seen to assist in building networks but were seen as valuable for building contacts; speculation as to the reasons for this are discussed in Section 4.4.2.

4.5.4 Considering Survey and Interview Together

As discussed, the survey was intended primarily as a validating tool. It functioned to confirm the general nature of informants’ discourse in the interviews. The primary divergence comes from differences in the value that events do or do not provide for building networks.

As discussed immediately above, while in the interviews there was a strong sense that events help to build networks and contacts; in the survey events were found to only help build contacts. The underlying reason for such a divergence in findings might be the context of the data collection method. Interviews allowed for context setting and an introduction into networking; for example, the Ego Net Exercise conducted at the beginning of the interview allowed the facilitator to set the scene and get informants thinking about networks. Although some event participants completed the surveys while they were networking it is possible that they were using their traditional mental models, which framed networking as an activity for contact-building rather than building their networks. It has been speculated that people who
have not been primed to consider networks do not do so; that is, their mental models do not explicitly consider networks and or the long-term value that networks provide. (Young, Wiley & Wilkinson 2008). A possible exception is when, as occurred in the interviews, informants are asked explicitly to consider things in network terms. Therefore, direct comparisons between the interview and the survey should be treated cautiously.

4.5.5 Considering Observation and Interview Together

The value of combining observations with follow-up interviews has been widely noted (e.g. Sieber 1973) and there are a number of different reasons given for doing so including, as discussed, having the ability to access thoughts and feelings that cannot be observed, probing for reasons for the observed behaviours and testing informants’ memories – that is, what they recall doing versus what they were observed doing (Piekkari, Plakoyiannaki & Welch 2010; Sieber 1973).

Combining the observation and interview findings provides a more complete picture, by considering both behaviour and reasons for such behaviour. The photographs taken during the observation acted as a link that tied the contents of the interviews and observer reflections together. The observations and interviews provided comparable findings in that the lexicographic analysis of the interviews (UDC analysis) indicated that event environment impacts on the during-network event behaviour of participants. This is in line with the observational findings. This link gives further confirmation that the physical nature of the space impacts on networking behaviour.

However, some divergence was identified between what was observed and what was reported, but a plausible explanation for deviation was usually provided. An example of this is where an attendee upon whom observation was focused did no observable networking. He arrived at the event with someone and spent the entire time talking to this same person. In the follow-up interview he described himself as a good networker and the event as a successful networking experience. When this divergence was queried, it turned out that he had brought his number one customer to the event and had spent the time “networking” with this one, important person, with considerable commercial benefit emerging. Furthermore, this was seen as a great
way to build business relationships; that is, to attend events with important customers. What needs to be noted here is that neither the observation nor interview on their own would have elicited this story (the latter because the informant wouldn’t have been questioned about this issue).

4.5.6 Considering Survey and Observation Together

In comparing the findings of the survey and observation study, the number of years in the workforce (related to maturity/age) and gender were a focus in both methods. One of the key observational findings was that the demographics of participants seemed to influence the ways in which they interacted at an event. In the survey the hypothesis testing of participant behaviour across the three phases of the event as it related to participant maturity and gender was conducted. For gender, all the hypotheses were rejected except for the hypothesis of association between gender and the during-network behaviour of participants. This association is in line with the findings of the observation. For example, both methods indicated that males were more likely to engage in interpersonal exchange and talk to people that they knew as well as meeting new people. Females on the other hand were not observed to have interacted with as many people during the event as were their male counterparts.

Again, these observations were in line with the survey results. However, in the observations the mature attendees consistently behaved quite differently to the younger attendees. This was not reflected in the survey findings, where all hypotheses testing for association with event behaviour with number of years in the workforce, which relates to maturity, were rejected. It is possible that this unexpected divergence of findings is due to the lack of congruence between age (which could be observed) and maturity (i.e. number of years in the workforce, which could not be observed); this can be considered in future work.

4.6 Concluding Paragraph

This chapter has demonstrated the general value of multi-method design. This value comes from interrelating the data (by conducting a comparative analysis within and across methods) to increase reliability and create synergy of insight. A more
substantive overview of how this relates to the research, research questions/problem and the contributions that are made by this are considered in the following chapter.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the study’s conclusions and show how they address the research questions and main research problem. To this end, this chapter has two main objectives. First, it summarises the findings of the study that is at the heart of thesis in terms of the research questions, discusses the results of multi-method data analysis, as presented in Chapter 4 and where possible links these findings to related prior research, as examined in Chapter 2. The second objective of this chapter is to provide a discussion of the contributions of this study, the implications for practice and theory, as well as comments on the limitations and future direction of this research.

This study considers non-accidental business relationship beginnings; in other words, the proactive seeking of business contacts and connections. The more specific focus of this research is to consider the nature of and the value accruing when attending organised networking events. Also considered are the motives, assessments and actions before, during and after a participant’s networking with prospective contacts and the value they perceive they gain in doing so.

To this end, Chapter 1 introduced the background to the topic, the objectives of the study and the structure of the thesis. Chapter 2 reviewed the literature of networks, their structural properties and characteristics, the networking process and the value gained from networking. These discussions were guided by a conceptual framework which was introduced in the chapter. Chapter 3 discussed the research methodology, which included the research paradigm, the research design for both the quantitative and qualitative data including sampling, the research instruments and data analysis techniques, as well as ethical considerations of the study. Chapter 4 presented the ways in which analysis was conducted on the observational, interview and survey
data and discussed the findings that emerged from such analysis. Concluding this chapter was the way in which the multiple data sources combine in order to provide additional insights.

5.2 Addressing the Research Questions

5.2.1 Research Question 1

Chapter 4 concluded with a presentation of the main findings of the study. Consideration of these is continued here, but with more focus on the findings in terms of the research questions. Research Question 1 considers what patterns of behaviour professionals display while interacting in purposeful facilitated networking activities and how this behaviour evolves during networking events. All three methods provided information with respect to this question; however, it was the observations that most comprehensively addressed it. Overall, the observational findings reveal that there are identifiable patterns in the ways in which participants behave at networking events. This is in line with the work of Heider (1958) and his theory of balance which argues that people will consciously and unconsciously behave in ways that bring them cognitive balance because this is preferred to imbalance. Cognitive balance is achieved in this context when the people connected via networking are perceived as likely to provide value (Young & Johnston 1997). This requires (mutual) behaviour by networkers that will attract others and allow assessment of their attractiveness. The study shows that the behaviour likely to do this is fairly consistent.

This is in line with work in services marketing which indicates that positive behaviour is identifiable and observable because there are common ways that people express their cognitive preferences (Sundaram & Webster 2000). Here, as discussed demographics, event style and the phases of the event all are factors that influence what behaviour is displayed by participants at an event. This is in line with findings of Merchant (2012) which shows that demographic factors (i.e. age and gender) influence behaviour. And it is line with the theories of environmental psychology that assert that the physical (style and ambience of the setting) and psychological
nature of the event influences behaviour (Bitner 1992; Tombs & McColl-Kennedy 2010).

Gender and age influences are exhibited in that younger attendees are likely to attach themselves to colleagues and regularly re-join them during a networking event. Older male colleagues appear to be comfortable with this and appear to play something of a mentoring role for their proximate colleagues. The most frequently observed pattern is that of younger females attaching themselves to older male colleagues. It should be noted, that to some degree, this reflects the demographic profile of an event; that is, there are few older female participants who could act as mentors. Younger males appear to be more likely to be confident and independent and are less likely to remain with colleagues – older or younger.

Attendees commonly experience distractions from networking at events; the nature of the distractions differs by gender. Female delegates appear to be more distracted and awkward as they network than are males and one main cause of this appears to be their carrying more – handbags as well as phones, drinks and so on. Combined, too many objects interrupt the smooth flow of networking activities for example exchanging cards and shaking hands. Males’ distractions are likely to be associated with their mobile phones as they are more likely to take calls during the networking portions of an event. Using the phone takes time away from networking and it is also observed to break up the conversations that lead to connection-building. It was consistently observed that taking a call terminates a conversation and the delegate has to “start over” with a new conversation when they finish speaking to their caller. However, it is worth noting that males appear to start new conversations more easily than do females.

Furthermore, it was observed that older attendees, particularly older males, were more confident than their female counterparts in that they were more likely to approach different groups of people during the allocated networking time of the event. This higher level of interaction indicated that older males had the highest propensity to initiate new conversations that will presumably assist them in building rapport and early stage relationships.
The greeting style displayed by delegates also differs based on gender. Females displayed more variation in their behaviours in that they would either greet other attendees (both male and female) with a standard handshake or a more personal kiss on the cheek – when it appeared that they knew them. In addition to obvious recognition (e.g. the oral greeting implying previous acquaintance), familiarity and friendliness was inferred through the more personal greeting, body language and closer physical proximity of participants. When participants appeared to be unacquainted they greeted each other with a professional handshake irrespective of gender.

Similarly, the nature of the physical space influences the possibilities for and constraints to networking behaviour. Irrespective of age or gender people behave differently depending on how much space is available, the general ambience and the atmosphere provided. The critical factor in the physical space appears to be the size and layout of the event space. This is because the nature of the space is likely to encourage or hinder the participants from moving around the room and connecting with other attendees. For example, more constrained (narrower) configurations appeared to limit the amount of movement between groups in contrast to more open spaces with less effective networking the result.

Another interesting finding from this study suggests that the spatial design of a room can impact behaviour by distracting attendees from networking. Such distractions are often in the form of sponsor stalls or charity auctions located around the periphery of the networking space, leading attendees to interact more with these stalls than with one another – usually at the beginning of the networking time.

The behaviours of attendees also varied based on the nature of the events; that is, whether it was a mostly stand up or a sit down event. When participants attended a stand up networking event there was a tendency for them to form groups of two to six. While small group conversations tended to include everyone in a single conversation, the larger sized (greater than four) groups would often carry on conversations with those attendees who were in closer proximity to them within the group (rather than those on the other side of the group that were more distant). These larger groups were observed to often stand in a closed-off circle formation, making it difficult for other attendees (not already in the group) to join the conversation. The
issue of proximity also plays an influencing role in attendees’ interactions at sit down events. The “starting conditions”, that is who you sit next to at the beginning of the event, are critical as attendees engage with those people sitting on either side of them the majority of the time. Attendees move position at the table only very rarely.

Another environmental factor that influenced behaviour was the type of event setting, which was often dictated by the format of the event (e.g. socially-oriented versus primarily a seminar). The more socially oriented events were most often held in a relatively larger setting with food, alcohol, slightly dimmed lighting and soft background music. The networking behaviour at these types of events appeared more socially effective than was the case in other settings. For example, attendees interacted with more people, joined more groups and appeared to make more contacts in these settings. Furthermore, these larger social events often allowed attendees to avoid the awkwardness of trying to find someone to talk to. This is distinct from the smaller, more seminar-style events that seemed to have an increased amount of “awkward” moments with participants standing alone. Seminar-like events were usually held in more of a classroom-style venue – that is, with desks/tables and chairs – and would often include morning/afternoon tea refreshments, bright fluorescent lighting and a set up where there was a front podium. At these types of events attendees would often primarily engage with the speaker and the material being presented and in general relatively less networking among participants occurred.

Behaviour also differed at different stages (initial, middle, end) of the event; in other words, people did not behave consistently throughout an event. However, this was dictated more by the format of the event, i.e. the formal programme, than anything else. At events there were predetermined amounts of time set aside for networking. During featured activity (e.g. speaker or panel discussion) there was virtually no networking, i.e. attendees did not interact with one another unless there were break out groups or a workshop. Before and after this featured activity, networking behaviour, i.e. interaction with others, was the focus. However, when networking occurred, the behaviour itself was virtually the same, with attendees moving among shifting groups of attendees making contacts and/or finding a group and remaining within it. Participants tended to stay in groups for a varied amount of time, anywhere between 10–20 minutes, before moving on to another group. The frequency of
attendees moving from group to group varied based on age and gender in that, as discussed earlier, older male attendees are more likely to interact with more different groups of people. It does seem that attendees are more relaxed in late-stage networking (i.e. after the featured activity) than they are in the initial stage, i.e. the pre-featured activities. However, there could be some selection bias driving this observation. Most attendees exit events after only a very short time of networking following the featured activity/middle phase of the event. It is possible that those that remain for longer times and thus can be observed are inherently more sociable and thus are more relaxed in social settings.

The lexicographic analysis of the interviews provided a conceptual structure which represented the way event attendees’ reflections were organised in their own minds. This analysis as indicated in Figure 4.15 (Chapter 4) shows these reflections to be organised into three distinct components. One is concerned with their reflections on the photos they were shown in the interviews and includes concepts that emerge from their explanations of what is happening in the photos; for example, group, speak, room and conversation. The second component is similarly focused around the tangible/observable elements of events (represented by the user-defined concept [UDC], during-event NOUN) and the concepts linked to it. This is in line with the focus of the first research question.

The third component is concerned with the UDC networking value and the concepts linked to this, including the UDC post-event follow-up. This is the focus of the second research question. The facilitator’s discourse seems to serve to (conceptually) link the three components, with its focus being on the concepts event, during event VERB and (more generic) value. This analysis of facilitator discourse also highlights the guiding role that the interviewer played; that is, linking the various stages of the interview. These issues are considered further in Section 5.2.2.

The behavioural processes at work in networking were differentiated via this conceptual analysis. The lexicographic concepts are, as previously mentioned, linked to a browser that allows examples of the concepts to be accessed. This allows behavioural processes to be considered in the informant’s own words. To give a flavour of this, sample quotes of the full set of discourse coded as a particular key concept were reviewed and were selected based on their representativeness of the
general tone and nature of the set of discourse coded for each concept. These are presented below.

With respect to the first component, reflections during photo elicitation, examples of informant discourse and the behavioural process-related concept that it represents include:

(The concept Doing) **Older Female Participant:** So then I would go in - I usually work the room first to see who's there and have a look at what's going on and see what the vibe's like and then start talking to people – usually someone I know, unless I catch someone's eye…

(The concept Conversation) **Younger Female Participant:** Yes. We were talking about Park Royal's plans to extend to other countries. I found that conversation really interesting. But I do remember, at first in this moment, when there were three men, they were kind of talking amongst themselves…I started to feel a little bit kind of uncomfortable. Because the conversation was a little bit out of my depth.

(The concept Speak) **Older Male Participant:** At lunchtime events it's always pretty difficult to actually network because they normally have like a window of half an hour pre-event and then you go in and sit on your tables. Sometimes the tables, if you're sitting at a table of 10, it's a bit difficult to speak to the person over the other end of the table. So really you've got your immediate people sitting left and right

(The concept Group) **Young Female Participant:** I'll either introduce myself or I'll join a group of people that I might - there's somebody within the group that I know. Often I find that people will often approach me, and so I don't have to go through that awkward introductory phase.

(The concept Group) **Older Female Participant:** When you're in a room full of women, networking, it is collegial, it is open, strangers go up and talk to each other, even if you're in a group. You know how
it's hard to break into a group at a networking event if you don't know someone? At these ones, people open up, the women open the group and say, oh - as soon as they spot someone on their own – come in, come and speak to us. Oh where are you from, what are you doing?... they talk about business and private, so very often you might have a conversation about the family, about personal issues, about health issues, weight, hair - whatever - girl stuff. But also, business is being done.

(The concept *Group*) **Younger Male Participant:** It doesn't help at all because you tend to go as a group and come as a group and tend to stick as a group. It's better if we go as one or two to these functions - as a single person - because we stick within our own circle and we don't let anyone in so to speak.

There are three examples of discourse coded as *group* shown above. This is because there was considerable variation in the issues raised that were coded as *group* and because these appeared to be gender based to some degree. The female participants focus their discussion of groups around the difficult and ‘awkward’ experience of ‘breaking into a group’. However, the focus of the male participant is on the issue of attending events in groups and the potential impact this has on meeting new people. The other quotes related to *doing, conversation and speak* give specific examples of the nature of the behavioural processes that informants saw happening in photos.

The nuances of the behavioural processes reflected in the second component, i.e. the tangible elements of the event are also effectively demonstrated by considering them in terms of the voice of the informants. These reflections were more likely to occur during the interview’s main discussion of their approaches to networking and experiences with it rather than during photo elicitation. Examples of reflections concerned with the tangible elements of events and associated networking include:

*(The concept *During networking behaviour NOUN*) **Young Male Participant:** So when you start to talk about business events like this, you're building a corporate box at the football or the cricket for example. You invite all these different business colleagues that yes
you’ve got a business relationship with but most of the work is done
talking about completely unrelated, informal social events and
activities as opposed to business itself.

(The concept Cards) Older Female Participant: If people offer me
their card, I will give one in exchange. I think that's polite. I don't
offer my card to everybody because there's no point. However, I'll
sometimes do it to find out who they are - like what they do - if I’m
not sure - like if I want information about them… I will make sure
my card is turned around the right way and that I present it correctly
and those sorts of things.

(The concept Trying) Older Male Participant: Sometimes with all
of these events you’ve got to find some common ground with
people. That's what having conversations with people is all about -
just finding that common ground and trying to open up a door so they
feel more comfortable.

(The concept Opportunity) Younger Female Participant: …A
cocktail event, if you are there for three hours you’ve got the whole
room and you just keep walking around and talking to different
people in the room. There is more opportunity to meet new people at
a cocktail event than there is at a sit down event.

These quotes illustrate different aspects of the networking process than did the
previous set. Here four different aspects are considered. The first quote, for during
networking behaviour noun, highlights that the event itself is a tangible element in
the same way that a corporate box is tangible. Both provide a concrete setting for
connecting with others. Cards are obviously an important part of the tangible
elements of the networking process and the sample quote highlights the continuing
importance of the protocols of exchanging business cards. This is reflected across all
informants. The concept trying is an activity however it is strongly linked with
conversations i.e. trying to have them, and conversations are presented by informants
in a tangible way, i.e. they are a thing unto themselves. Opportunity is closely related
to event and again is seen as a tangible thing.
In addition to the conceptual structure presented from the lexicographic analysis, also emerging from the interviews were insights as to the factors influencing the previously-observed process of networking. In other words, why certain behaviours were exhibited emerged from the interviews. For each informant the interviewer attempted to clarify any observed anomalies and patterns in behaviour throughout the interview. An example of the kinds of insight this provided emerges from the following example. An attendee upon whom observation was focused did no observable networking. He arrived at the event with someone and spent the entire time talking to this same person. In the follow-up interview he described himself as a good networker and the event as a successful networking experience. When this divergence was queried, it turned out that he had brought his number one customer to the event and had spent the time “networking” with this one, important person, with considerable commercial benefit emerging.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to enumerate all such anomalies. However, the previous example (i) highlights that what is observed often doesn’t make sense unless it is explained by the attendee; and (ii) indicates that these explanations are mostly situation specific – that is, anomalies in networking are difficult to compare or generalize. Furthermore, this specific example highlights that “networking” has several different meanings and motives; this further complicates the ability to find patterns in “unusual” networking episodes.

The survey also includes some questioning as to the behavioural processes of networking. This includes consideration of processes of pre-event, during-event and post-event behaviour. The findings of the survey are largely in line with the findings of the observations and interviews. Specifically, the during-event behaviour observed is in line with the behaviours that respondents indicate in the interviews and agree in the survey that they undertake. This behaviour includes handing out and seeking business cards, talking to people they know and meeting new people. The survey analysis shows that these behaviours are specialised, with people tending to focus on interpersonal exchanges and/or on business card exchange rather than on both. Similar specialisation of behaviour was found with respect to preparation, which was differentiated primarily according to quantity of preparation; that is, either there was substantial preparation and planning or (more commonly) virtually none. With respect to follow-up behaviour, this was differentiated according to what kind of
media was used to facilitate follow ups; that is, either email or social media was used. It should be noted that pre- and post-event behaviours were not observed but the description of these behavioural processes contained in the interviews is congruent with survey responses.

5.2.2 Research Question 2

The second research question considers what motivates business professionals to attend networking events, specifically focusing on the benefits they seek and achieve from networking as well as the perceived value created from this process. Only the most general inferences could be drawn from the observation data; however, both the interview and survey methods provided considerable information. It was the interviews that most comprehensively considered this.

Overall, the interview findings reveal that value does emerge from and flow to peoples’ professional and personal networks and that this happens in conjunction with building contacts and participating in other event follow-up activities. The conceptual analysis of the interviews as illustrated in Figure 4.15 (Chapter 4) shows that Networking_value is linked to social structure delimiters such as contact, social, industry and network. The position of networking_value in relation to the other concepts shows it is linked to post-networking_followup via contact. This indicates that (building) contacts are at the heart of networking activities and are a key element of it. Networking_value is also close and linked to industry and social, indicating that these elements/concepts too are sources and/or recipients of the value emulating from networking. Also directly linked to networking_value is network (linked to both professional and personal but with the stronger link to professional), indicating that one’s networks are the sources and/or recipients of networking_value. These associations emerge from the discourse of the informants as networking_value is directly linked to the discourse of the interviewees (Speaker_interviewee), and is not linked to the facilitator (Speaker_facilitator), as shown by where there are (and are not) direct links between the concepts.

The process of value creation can be effectively illustrated by considering the informants’ voice; that is, verbatim quotes from the interviews. These were selected in the same way as the sample quotes provided in previous section. Examples of
interviewee reflections concerned with the somewhat different value/motivation of attending networking events associated with related concepts include:

(The concept Networking_value) **Older Female Participant:** ...I see networking as really facilitating bringing people together. Sometimes that means directly benefiting by being engaged to do some consulting work for them...when I go to a networking event, I'm looking for opportunities to bring people within my network together or creating opportunities for them.

(The concept Contact) **Older Male Participant:** I mean there’s been many times you go to a function and walk away with nothing useful. But in most cases, two out of three, I probably walk away with a couple of good names of contacts and having spoken to a couple of people that I was quite interested - or caught up or re-invigorated a past contact.

(The concept Post-networking_followup) **Older Male Participant:** For me it’s always that quick follow-up, so if you’re not in contact within the next day or two people are going to forget. Sometimes emails work better with some people, but some people love the phone. If we’ve met, we’ve exchanged cards and said look we should catch up, I always like to leave - with the next step almost lined up. So saying let’s catch up for a coffee and have a chat. If we both think that there’s something there.

It is interesting to note that within the discourse that is coded as these concepts, value-related concepts include a lot of “activity”. For example, the networking value concept sample quote talks about facilitating, benefiting and looking for and creating opportunities. Similarly, the contact quote focuses on the value gained from the networking event as does the post-networking follow-up quote which considers the more specific activities that can be undertaken to progress the process of value creation. There are three different perspectives of value presented here, value given to others, value you yourself receive and the third quote considers both, i.e. mutual value creation. Most informants considered all three perspectives of value during the course of their interview but associated them with different stages of the networking process. For example, one informant might focus on mutual value during discussions
of their overall perceptions of networking value. While the focus on individual value, i.e. building of contacts, might be considered in the discussion of their more recent networking experiences.

The survey results consider the goals/benefits participants have/seek when attending events. These are generally directed towards more business building: 65% attend to generate leads and about a third of respondents indicate that they do so to get contacts and showcase capabilities. This is in contrast to more long-term or general goals, with less than 20% of respondents indicating that it was a goal to learn or build relationships. It should be noted that the survey did have an “other” category such that respondents could indicate other benefits or value emerging. However, this was not extensively used.

The survey analysis presented in Chapter 4 explores whether attitudes towards events drive (and/or are driven by) event behaviour. Chi-square analysis of the association between respondents’ perceived value of events in terms of whether they help build networks or contacts and their cluster membership (i.e. patterns of networking behaviour) was undertaken. This showed that event behaviour is not related to perceptions of events helping to build networks. However, perceptions of events helping to build contacts is associated with preparation, during-event behaviour and follow up. Interestingly, it is those who prepare only to a moderate degree that are most positive about the value of events in building contacts. Perhaps even more interestingly, and rather surprisingly, those who focus on interpersonal exchanges while at events see the least value in events for contact building. And, those who follow up with contacts made using the personalised, direct contact of emails are likely to be only moderately positive in their perceptions of the value of events for contact-making.

These findings regarding the perceived value of events are puzzling. Further, events were not perceived to assist in building networks but were seen as valuable for building contacts. This may align with previous work on perceived network value. Wiley, Wilkinson and Young (2006) found that networks were perceived as relatively unimportant to managers. They speculated that managers may have micro- and short-term perspectives that preclude them from perceiving the nature of their
participation in networks and thus from perceiving any resulting value. That dynamic may also apply to this context.

These findings are in contrast to the interviews, where there was a strong sense that events help to build networks and contacts. The underlying reason for such a divergence in findings might be the context of the data collection. Interviews allowed for context setting and an introduction to networking. For example, the Ego Net Exercise conducted at the beginning of the interview, where informants drew a picture of their network (context setting), allowed the facilitator to set the scene and get informants thinking about networks. In the main this did not occur in the survey setting. Although some participants completed the surveys while they were networking and thus the context was set, others completed the survey online. And it is possible that both groups used a traditional mental model that may well frame networking as an activity for contact-building rather than for building their networks. This possible context effect means that direct comparisons between the interviews and the survey should be done cautiously.

Figure 5.1 brings together much of the preceding discussions where the findings have been considered individually. This model is broken into three parts indicated by boxes with three different colours. The blue boxes are concerned with the factors that have been shown to influence networking behaviour (personal characteristics, networking environment, in-put behaviours, event preparation and existing networks), the green one is the patterns of networking behaviour identified (joining/leaving groups, nature and amount of movement between groups and card exchange) and the orange boxes are the outcomes of networking (development of networking expertise and follow-up behaviour). The figure has feedback loops indicating that this process is likely to be a continuing one with the development of networking expertise and follow up behaviour likely to impact on future networking behaviour.

While the blue boxes influence networking behaviour, no relation has been depicted between these as this was not the focus of the research. The figure highlights the multiplicity of factors that play a role in the networking behaviour and would allow analysis and comparison on an individual level to be examined (depicted by direction of arrows). The model highlights that there are many potential types of networking behaviours and that these can and will be exhibited in different ways and will lead to
different outcomes. The model however generalizes a general process that applies for networks.

No connection has been indicated between the patterns of networking behaviour (in the green box). While information has been collected that will allow the exploration of this, it will form part of the future research to look at patterns between the behaviours of networking and the more specific outcomes that they engender.

**Figure 5.1   Process of Developing Networking Capability**
5.3 Contribution of Research

The previous discussion of the ways the research questions have been addressed provides implicit indications of what the contributions of this work are. The context of networking at professional events has not been addressed in the academic literature and while practitioner-based, normative theories abound, evidence-based descriptive theories that can provide foundation for these (Hunt 1976) do not. This work provides foundation for further study of the way business professionals network by considering what they do, why they believe they do it, what value they receive from it and what this value is likely to be. From this, theories can begin to be constructed.

A conceptual contribution is made by combining existing theories in novel ways (Ridley 2010). This primarily descriptive theory is informed by bringing together the arguably neglected work of environmental psychology, social psychology and B2B theories of relationships and networks. This has been used to both frame the protocols that guided the observations and to interpret these and integrate them with the insights provided by the follow-up interviews.

There is also a methodological contribution. While none of the individual methods used are novel, their combination is. A review of the methods literature did not find another similar combination where multi-perspective observations (i.e. micro, macro and single), multi-framed interviews (i.e. including both conversational reflection and photo elicitation) and a validating survey were used.

While still primarily descriptive, this work makes additional knowledge contributions. Where descriptions existed before, there is now a more nuanced description of how people behave when they attend a facilitated networking event. While that in itself may not be seen to be a very substantive contribution, when the implications and insights of that description are considered, the contribution becomes more significant. Theories of the philosophy of science tell us that description does not progress knowledge to the same degree as explanation or prediction (Chalmers 2013). This thesis has primarily provided a description of networking and participants’ reflections on it but it does go further and provide explanations of why
the actors believe they behave as they do and what they predict the outcomes of networking will be.

The contribution of greater understanding of the networking process has thus far only been considered in terms of the initiation and formation of business relationships and networks. The contribution to theory here is primarily in terms of aligning people’s networking behaviour and their motives for networking. The description on its own may have only limited value. If the processes of networking and the reasoning behind those processes are considered in a services marketing or sales context the contribution is more obvious. For example, in service encounters (including industrial service encounters) the interpersonal contact building behaviours and motivations examined here have obvious relevance. Similarly, in the area of sales, it has already been argued that a network and networking perspective is needed if theory and practice are to progress (Borg & Young 2014). This is not to say that knowledge about networking process has no relevance in the B2B marketing discipline. As already noted, writers such as McGarry (1951) and Alderson (1965) argued that in an industrial sphere having the contacts in place that make it possible for one to contact others they have previously met and built some sort link with or to contact more distant parts of the network, i.e. people with whom people that you are acquainted are acquainted is central.

Overall, this study brings together ideas that have not previously been jointly used, and brings together methodologies that have been extended via the development of systematic qualitative protocols for observations and systematic analysis of observations. This proved to be effective, as indicated by the findings that emerged. The qualitative methods were augmented via the further validation provided by the survey. This multi-method contribution is important not only in the networking context but more generally in studies that focus on interpersonal interactions.

5.4 Implications

These findings have significant managerial implications. Understanding the ways in which an organisational representative is likely to behave based on their age and gender could inform organisational policy with regard to the training and/or mentoring provided to managers and other employees prior to sending them to a
networking event. These findings also highlight the potential value of implementing an event-related mentorship program. Given that organisations invest time and financial resources into sending representatives to these events, it makes sense that the organisation would want to get the most out of such an investment. These types of training could also cover the ways in which attendees could manage the observed networking distractions; that is, the use of a mobile device during the event as well as the struggle of holding a handbag while maintaining open and expressive body language.

Knowing how people behave and what underpins this behaviour enables firms to better leverage the potential opportunities that events present. A key point emerging from these findings is that there are skills and experience residing in more mature employees that can provide value. This should be utilised. These findings show that “event mentoring” is already an important way that younger attendees form contacts and learn how to network. The lexicographic analysis findings indirectly support the need for mentoring, showing that informants’ mindsets are such that they only see some of the opportunities that networking can provide (e.g. this is indicated by the lack of conceptual connection between the informant and during-networking behaviour VERB). This lack of connection indicates that the full range of activities that could conceivably constitute networking are not part of many informants’ evoked set.

Management increasing their understanding of the processes at play should facilitate their assistance in the process; for example, they can ensure the right mix of employees attend events, that more experienced networkers are informed of the mentoring that they might do, they can encourage such networkers to be mentors and reward them for being strategic in arranging introductions that will help to build the best possible value for their younger colleagues. At the individual network level training can similarly set goals for developing good interpersonal skills and a strategic mindset to guide participants. More formalised networking training may assist – along the lines provided by industries that teaches networking skills – or more generic guidance in how to spot opportunities and seize them may be more suitable. Future research could consider this (as discussed below).
5.5 Limitations

This section outlines the major limitations that have become apparent during the course of the research and that were deliberately incorporated into the somewhat abductive research design.

This research has three limitations that have been identified. The first limitation relates to researcher bias, as discussed in Chapter 4, it was difficult to separate being a researcher from being a true and complete participant. The intended research design for part of the observational study was for the researcher to completely immerse herself into the networking event environment and to subsequently reflect on those experiences. However, as was recognised very early on in the research, a complete participant role was difficult to achieve. This issue has been recognised by other researchers including Baker (2006). In order to mediate this limitation, the researcher attended two of the events as both a participant observer, developing a check list that included possible topics for observation and ways of observing.

The second limitation of this study is concerned with participant bias in regards to memory recall. A key focus of the in-depth interviews was asking informants to recall past events and reflect on their behaviours and experiences with networking. During these discussions, informants were questioned about their experiences with a particular event, that often times, had occurred a week prior to the interview. These discussions would focus on informants’ reflections on their behaviours and the reasons for such behaviours. As such informant responses were subject to the limitations of memory recall. The use of presenting informants with a portfolio of photographs (photo elicitation) successfully prompted the memory of informants and allowed them to engage in story telling regarding their experiences.

The third limitation relates to the lack of existing theory and directions that were available to guide this type of multi-method enquiry. In particular, there were no previous studies that provided guidance as to how to conduct multi-method study that combined multi-perspective observations, multi-framed interviews and a validating survey. Case studies frequently assert they are multi-method and have included observation however the reporting of findings very seldom include anything about the observation, instead they tend to largely or exclusively focus on the content
of interviews and secondary data. To mediate this limitation pilot studies were conducted to test the methods that resulted in the development of protocols and checklists (discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.6) to ensure systematic data collection and analysis.

5.6 Further Research

Given that this study is very exploratory in nature, due to the lack of work which precedes it, further research that replicates this is needed. The following are both indications of research that is planned and suggestions for research in this area:

1. The multi-method approach taken in this study resulted in a relatively large dataset. Due to the inevitable time restrictions associated with completing a PhD, fundamental decisions had to be made in regards to the analysis conducted with some options deferred until after the thesis is completed. One example of further analysis that can be conducted includes a comparative lexicographic analysis on: the transcripts of the observer’s reflections across the multi-perspective approaches and the reflections from the participants based on the photo elicitation component of the interviews. Another example of how the comparative analysis of the multi-method data could be extended is by comparing the reported behaviours of participants during the interviews and their cluster membership based on their results from the validating survey.

2. This study can be extended to consider other events run by different networking organisations outside the Greater Western Sydney context. This would confirm if the overall findings are a factor of the Greater Western Sydney context, particularly the WSBC or if these are common to other contexts for example the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry that hold events and conferences for businesses of all sizes and sectors across Australia.

3. As identified and discussed in Chapter 4, Section 4.5.4, informants perceive value differently and the reporting of these perceptions can be influenced by the context within which the data is collected. The variation in this reporting is consistent with Wiley, Wilkinson and Young (2006) who found that
networks were perceived as relatively unimportant to managers which may be potentially due to their micro- and short term perspective of networks. In order to better mediate this issue and gain a greater understanding of the perceived and actual value networking event attendees gain, a replication of this study using a longitudinal approach is suggested. This study could potentially track the motivations of the attendees with a pre-event interview, replicate the observation study to capture their behaviour during the event and conduct a number of in-depth interviews with the same informant over an extended period of time (see Evers, Marroun and Young (forthcoming) for an example of this approach). These interviews could focus both on short term and long term value gained.

5.7 Concluding Note

This work contributes to B2B marketing theory and practice by extending knowledge about how individuals seek relationships. This area has thus far been overlooked. The 1980s and ‘90s saw an increasing focus on relationship retention practices and to some degree this appears to have been at the cost of considering relationship initiation practices. Where such initiation work exists it is almost entirely in the sales context; however, theories of relationships and networks tell us that business relationships go far beyond salesperson–customer connections. Considering contact establishment is a first step to understanding how networks can be leveraged for value: to the individual, to their firm, to the relationships their firm has with others and to the network(s) in which they all sit. This research considers those practices in some depth and shows that, among other things, business practitioners often seek extensions to their professional network. It is less conclusive from this research whether these result in network improvements although improvement to contacts is strongly indicated. Nor is there evidence that translates an individual’s contact and network improvements to benefits for the organisation of which they are members. This is important to note and understand. To the extent that the translation is occurring, there is likely to be an important source of value for firms. If translation is not occurring there needs to be further attention paid to how personal/professional networking can be leveraged for organisational, relational and networking benefits
that can assuredly lead and assist in building, in the words of Alderson (1965), “competitive advantage”.
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## Appendices

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Appendix 1: Informed Consent Email

From: Erin Pausey [mailto:admin@wsbc.org.au]
Sent: Tue 21/09/2010 2:48 PM
To: WSBC Event Attendees
Subject: David Gallop – Special Note UWS PhD Student

Dear “Attendee”,

We are currently working with Sana Marroun, PhD Student, at UWS with her research about online social and professional networking. Sana will be attending the event on Thursday and would like to take photos at the event for her research. If you do not want Sana to approach you, please simply reply to this email, with your name and company noted, and Sana will not approach you. This is an opportunity for us to learn more about networking and if you would like to know more about Sana’s research please do not hesitate to call myself or Sana direct.

Please find a short note from Sana following.

Kindest regards,
Keren Lavery

My name is Sana Marroun and I am a PhD student with the School of Marketing at the University of Western Sydney (UWS). I am currently in the early stages of my research. This is focused on the relationship between social/professional networking and business network value creation.

At present I have the cooperation and support of Western Sydney Business Connection (WSBC) and permission from the Human Research Ethics Committee Chair Dr Janette Perz (at UWS) to attend the upcoming WSBC event ‘Successfully Managing your Brand with David Gallop’ on the 23rd of September 2010. The purpose for attending this event is to observe how attendees interact at the function.

With your consent I intend on taking photographs throughout the day. Please note that the photographs I take will not be used in the writing up of the thesis or any other publication but rather it will give me the opportunity to refine my data collection process. If you have any problems or issues with my photographing you at this event please make these known to me either by return email and or on the day and I will endeavour to avoid including your image in the photos that I take.

If you have any questions regarding my study and/or my presence at the upcoming event please feel free to contact me via email s.marroun@uws.edu.au or by phone on 0405 975 471.

Phone: (02) 9687 2788 Fax: (02) 9687 2789
www.wsbc.org.au
Western Sydney Business Connection
Connecting People, Places and Business
Appendix 2: Protocols Used During Observation Process

Table A2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Macro Perspective</th>
<th>Micro Perspective</th>
<th>Single Perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Notes to take during narrated recordings of observations at the events include:</td>
<td>Notes to take during narrated recordings of observations at the events include:</td>
<td>Note down results of the below quasi experiments during post-event reflections:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A description of the event setup and general ambience of the space.</td>
<td>• A description of the event setup and general ambience of the space.</td>
<td>• What happens if I stand alone?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Noting demographics of attendees at the event.</td>
<td>• Who the focus participants are for the particular event?</td>
<td>• What happens if I approach someone standing alone?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How attendees are forming groups and the kinds of interactions happening within these groups.</td>
<td>• When did the focus participant arrive?</td>
<td>• What happens when I approach a small group of people (fewer than 4)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Description of the proximity between attendees as well as between groups of attendees.</td>
<td>• Did they attend the event alone or with someone else?</td>
<td>• What happens when I stand with a small group of people (fewer than 4)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How the configuration of groups changes over the course of the event?</td>
<td>• What initial behaviours do they display?</td>
<td>• What happens when I approach a large group of people (greater than 4)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How attendees differed in their behaviour based on their demographics (age and gender).</td>
<td>• How do they move around the networking space?</td>
<td>• What happens when I stand with a large group of people (greater than 4)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How the networking space influenced the way in which attendees moved around the space and interacted with one another?</td>
<td>• How many other attendees to they interact with?</td>
<td>• How do my interactions differ between attendees with varied demographics and networking experience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Patterns of behaviour displayed during the different phases of the event.</td>
<td>• How do they behave once event formalities have concluded?</td>
<td>• What are the benefits of moving around the room versus staying in the same spot?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Types of photographs to take during networking event include:

- The setup of the event including sponsor material and branding.
- The focus attendee as they enter the event space and/or at the registration desk.
- What the attendee does as they enter the event space, i.e. approach another attendee or gravitate towards the beverages.
- Systematically photograph the focus participant throughout the duration of the event capturing their movement, the people that they are talking and how they engage with the networking space.

Types of photographs to take during networking event include:

- The setup of the event including sponsor material and branding.
- Focused photographs of the observer-participant as she transitions throughout the event.
Appendix 3: Interview Guide

Table A3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Guiding Interview Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ego Net Exercise</td>
<td>I thought we could start off by picturing what your network looks like. Here is something that you can fill in. Just put those whose name first come to mind, you can change it and make additions throughout the interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Justification:</strong> The reason as to why an Ego Net Exercise was conducted at the beginning of the interview was so that I could start getting participants to think about their network and consider not only who they are connected to but also in what capacity this connection exists. By starting the interview discussion, using this reflective exercise, participants were encouraged to identify who their network is made up of, whether these network partners belong in a personal, professional or organisational part of their network and whether overlaps exist. Not only was the focus on identifying who sits where on their network map but also the how and why. How did they make these connections and why did they have either a defined relationship or more fluid relationship?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Networks</td>
<td>Let’s talk about your professional networks and networking activities. How would you characterise this network? How long have you known the people in your network? How many people make up your professional network? How did you meet the people within your professional network?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Justification:</strong> Broad questions to get them thinking about the topic of the interview. These questions were asked to prompt the participants to describe/characterise their Ego Net. The intention with this question was to facilitate storytelling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking Events</td>
<td>One thing you have or haven’t mentioned: going to specific networking events. Can you tell me about your history of networking events? How many events have you attended? What kind of events were they?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Justification:</strong> Now the focus is shifted to the participant’s history/experience with attending networking events. This question was asked to be able to clearly identify those participants who have long been attending events from those who are relatively new.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create and Maintain</td>
<td>Can you give me some examples of how you create and maintain connections with people/organisations in your networks? How typical is this example? Does it happen often?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections</td>
<td><strong>Justification:</strong> Eliciting specific examples from participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of Networks</td>
<td>What value does your personal network provide for you? And at what ‘cost’ (time, energy)? What value does your professional network provide for you? And at what ‘cost’ (time, energy)? What value does your organisational network provide for you and your organisation? And at what ‘cost’ (time, energy)? Can you provide explicit examples of overlaps between your personal, professional and organisational networks? Is there value in having these overlaps? If so, explain?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Justification:</strong> Here the question of value comes into play. Understanding the kind of value that participants get out of attending events for their personal, professional and organisational networks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Guiding Interview Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Pre-networking Considerations        | **What strategies if any do you consider prior to attending/engaging in a networking activity?**  
Seating arrangements, researching attendees, taking business cards, sending particular employees to represent organisation etc.  
**What preparation did you do prior to last week’s event? What do/did you expect to get out of attending events?**  
**Justification:** Now the interview looks more specifically at the networking process, starting with the pre-event considerations. Here the participant is asked whether or not any preparation is undertaken prior to attending an event. If so, why and if not, why not. |
| Photo Elicitation: During-event      | **Participants are shown a series of photographs which are grouped in accordance to the phase of the event it belongs to. These photos ranged from generic to focused depending on the participant.**  
First the participant was asked what they did at a particular phase of the event without the “aid” of the photographs then, once shown the photographs, participants were invited to talk about them as they relate to their own behaviours or the behaviours they have observed.  
**Justification:** This allows for an insight to the type of information given pre- and post-photo elicitation. |
| Behaviour                            | **Can you think of a networking experience that turned out to be really important? Tell me what happened at the event? What did that experience involve?**  
**Did you know at that time that this was an important event/contact made or was it something that occurred after a period of time?**  
**Tell me the series of important things that happened after making the contact / attending the event?**  
**Why do you think this particular experience came to mind? Why was it important?**  
**Justification:** Asking the participant about a stand-out event experience. |
| Example of a Past Event              | **Let’s talk about what happens after the event finishes.**  
Do you contact people after the event? Do people contact you?  
What kind of reasons do they give for making contact and what reasons do you give for contacting them?  
Where has it lead? Have you ever developed an important contact?  
More than one? Please tell me about them.  
**Justification:** At this stage, the participant is asked to share whether they follow up with any contacts post event. If so how, if not why not. |
| Post-event Behaviour                 | Has your behaviour at events changed over time? Are you happy with how you manage the event?  
Do you think that your views on facilitated networking events have changed over time?  
If so, in what way? If not, why do you think this is?  
Do you have any networking horror stories? Can you think of a specific time or issue that challenged your view of the value of creating and maintaining your networks is?  
On balance: more positive or negative experience/perceptions of networking activities?  
Anything I may be interested in regarding your network or networking experience that we haven’t discussed?  
**Justification:** Participants are asked to reflect on whether the way they approach networking events has changed over time. |
| Evolution of Behaviour               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
Appendix 4: Ego Net Exercise

Professional Network

Personal Network

Organisational Network
Appendix 5: Sample of Generic Photos used in Interviews

The below images are a sample of the generic photos shown during the photograph elicitation component of the in-depth interviews. These photos were sourced from the WSBC website and were selected based on the representativeness of the behaviours captured, for example, attendees at the registration table, attendees shaking hands and those congregating in groups.

Source: WSBC 2010
# Appendix 6: Overview of Events Attended and Data Collection Completed

Table A6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Name</th>
<th>Organiser</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Photographs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 03/11/11 | Sydney Thunder and WSBC Breakfast Launch        | Western Sydney Business Connection             | Focused Observations and Photographs of Pre-Identified Participants             | Participant SM: 45 Photos  
Participant SS: 24 Photos  
Participant TM: 18 Photos  
Participant AG: 0 Photos  
Total Focused Photographs: 87  
Total General Photographs: 141  
Total Photographs at Event: 228 |
| 22/11/11 | Manufacturers Connection Roundtable: Optimising Employee Engagement | Manufactures Connection                       | Focused Observations and Photographs of Pre-Identified Participants             | Participant GC: 95 Photos  
Participant MF: 116 Photos  
Participant MS: 160 Photos  
Participant PB: 75 Photos  
Total Focused Photographs: 446 (overlapping)  
Total General Photographs: 40  
Total Photographs at Event: 416 |
| 30/11/11 | WSBC End of Year Event: The Art of Survival with Charlie Lynn | Western Sydney Business Connection             | Focused Observations and Photographs of Pre-Identified Participants             | Participant CC: 9 Photos  
Participant MM: 23 Photos  
Participant STM: 19 Photos  
Participant JT: 0 Photos  
Participant MO: 0 Photos  
Total Focused Photographs: 51  
Total General Photographs: 165  
Total Photographs at Event: 216 |
| 07/12/11 | New Member and Sponsor Morning Tea              | Western Sydney Business Connection             | Focused Observations and Photographs of Pre-Identified Participants             | Participant BEL: 41 Photos  
Participant CAM: 53 Photos  
Participant DEA: 33 Photos  
Participant DMI: 50 Photos  
Participant JAC: 43 Photos  
Participant MANFR: 44 Photos  
Participant SHER: 46 Photos  
Participant TOB: 45 Photos  
Total Focused Photographs: 355 (overlapping)  
Total General Photographs: 80  
Total Photographs at Event: 373 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Name</th>
<th>Organiser</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Photographs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 02/02/12| ABC 2012 Lunar New Year                                                    | Asia Business Connection         | Macro Observations and Photographs of Broad Patterns of Behaviour / Interactions | Total Focused Photographs: 0  
Total General Photographs: 288  
Total Photographs at Event: 288 |
| 14/02/12| Connection X Panel Discussion: How to Brand Your Business and Self         | Connection X / Connect           | Macro Observations and Photographs of Broad Patterns of Behaviour / Interactions | Total Photographs at Event: 30                                                                 |
| 15/03/12| Manufacturers Connection: Employee Engagement with Peter Black             | Manufactures Connection          | Participant Observer: Being the Networker (without photographer)                | Total Photographs at Event: 0  
Participants Observer: Being the Networker (with photographer)                                        |
| 21/03/12| Business Leader Luncheon with NSW Small Business Commissioner, Ms Yasmin King | Western Sydney Business Connection | Participant Observer: Being the Networker (with photographer)                    | Total Photographs at Event: 178                                                                 |
Appendix 7: Copy of Survey Instrument

Below are attributes that can be used to describe networks and the way they are used. For each please indicate the extent to which your network is described by these attributes. In other words if you believe a statement describes your network well or fairly well you would circle 5 or 4 depending on how well, if it does not describe your network you would circle 1 or 2.

By a “network” we mean: The collection of individuals directly and indirectly linked/connected together by a set of relations.

Q1: How would you describe your network? (Circle one number for each attribute)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Describe my network well</th>
<th>Describe my network poorly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contains larger number of people than others</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that I know</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many people in my network know each other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My network is substantially bigger than it was</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years ago</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My network contains a lot of different people</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that I did not know 3 years ago</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q2: We are also interested in how you use your network (Circle one number for each attribute)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Describe my network well</th>
<th>Describe my network poorly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My colleagues/professional network provides</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>important information and access to</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opportunities for me (personally)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My colleagues/professional network provides</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>important information and access to</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opportunities for my organisation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q3: We are interested in the nature of your networking activities (Circle one number for each attribute)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Describe my networking</th>
<th>Describe my networking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I regularly go to networking events</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am an active member of online social networking sites</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I often have ideas about the kind of people</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would like to meet, at events I go</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q4: We are interested in the value that you believe networking events provide (Circle one number for each attribute)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Describe my viewpoint</th>
<th>Describe my viewpoint</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Networking events help me to build my network</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacts I have made at networking events in the past</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that have helped my organisation</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q5A. In which of the following ways are you likely to behave before attending a networking event? (Tick as many as apply)

- Look at a list of attendees
- Developing strategies to meet particular people
- Look at setting arrangements and choose possible meet

Q5B. Which of the following goals do you have when attending networking events? (Tick as many as apply)

- Get referrals
- Showcasing expertise
- Generate leads
- Showcase expertise
- Other

Q5C. Which of the following describe the way you behave at a networking event? (Tick as many as apply)

- Approach large groups
- Approach small groups or people standing alone
- Try and meet new people
- Talk to people you know
- Ask for business cards
- Hand out your business cards
- Other: please describe

Q6A. How are you most likely to undertake the activities ticked in Q5A?

- On my own
- With others

Q7. Which of the following describe the way you behave after your attendance at a networking event? (Tick as many as apply)

- Sort through business cards
- Call new contacts
- Add contacts to online social networking sites
- Send e-mails to new contacts
- Meet up with new contacts
- Other: please describe

Q8. On average when you attend an event how many business cards do you collect?

- Write in number

Q9. Which social networking sites are you a member of? (Tick as many as apply)

- Facebook
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Other

Q10. Which social networking sites is your organisation a member of? (Tick as many as apply)

- Facebook
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Other

Q11. How long have you been attending networking events?

- Less than 6 months
- 6-12 months
- 12-24 months
- More than 2 years

YOUR DETAILS

- Number of years in the workforce: [Write in]
- Nature of job/position: [Write in]
- Number of years in current position: [Write in]
- Gender: [ ] Male [ ] Female [ ] Prefer not to answer

Thank you!
Appendix 8: Justification of Survey Questions

Table A8

The sources of the survey items are not indicated because as noted in Chapter 3 Section 3.8 there were no previous studies from which to draw items.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Justification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How would you describe your network?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My network contains larger number of people than others I know.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Many people in my network know each other.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My network is substantially bigger than it was 5 years ago.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My network contains a lot of different people than it did 5 years ago.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The reason this question was included in the survey was to get a sense of how respondents would describe their network. Here respondents are able to rate some basic descriptors for their network depending on how accurately the statement represents/describes their network size and structure (over time).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We are also interested in how you use your network.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My colleagues / professional network provides important information and access to opportunities for me personally.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My colleagues / professional network provides important information and access to opportunities for my organisation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This question was included to gain a sense of how respondents used their professional network. To understand the proportion of respondents that tapped into their professional network for personal benefits as distinct from the benefits sought for the organisation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We are interested in the nature of your networking activities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I regularly attend networking events.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I am an active member of online social networking sites.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I often have ideas about the kind of people I would like to meet at the events I attend.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This survey question was included so as to understand the way respondents approach networking activities. The inclusion of this question and the statements given provide an indication as to whether the respondent:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Is active in attending networking events and/or engaging in online social networking sites (allowing for a comparison between the two);</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Attending networking events have preconceived ideas about the type of people that they want to meet showing a level of planning when approaching networking events.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We are interested in the value that you believe networking events provide.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Networking events help me to build my network.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Contacts I have made at networking events in the past have helped my organisation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This question was included so as to understand where respondents place most value in attending networking events – whether it is placed on building of their network or helping their organisation through building contacts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In which of the following ways are you likely to behave before attending a networking event? (Select as many as apply)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Look at a list of attendees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Develop strategies to meet particular</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This question was included in the survey to understand the ways in which respondents behave/prepare prior to attending a networking event.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Question</td>
<td>Justification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>people</td>
<td>Understanding the goals or lack thereof that respondents set when attending networking events is important providing insight into what attendees are there to do and what they want to achieve from the event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Look at seating arrangements and choose possible seat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which of the following goals do you have when attending networking events? (Select as many as apply)</td>
<td>This question was included to gain an insight into how respondents perceive the ways in which they behave at networking events based on how they approach other attendees at the event and the ways in which business cards are exchanged. Note: this is self-reflection of perceived behaviour at a networking event and may not in fact reflect or be true of the respondents’ actual behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Get referrals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Showcase expertise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Generate leads</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which of the following describe the ways you behave at a networking event? (Select as many as apply)</td>
<td>The reason for asking this question is to gain an insight into whether respondents are more likely to engage at an event with others that they know or have come to the event with OR are they more likely to undertake these behaviours on their own.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Approach large groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Approach small groups or people standing alone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Try to meet new people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Talk to people you know</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Ask for business cards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Hand out your business cards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are you most likely to undertake the activities you selected in the previous question? (Select one)</td>
<td>The reason for asking this question is to ascertain what respondents do after attending a networking event and how they follow up with contacts made at the event, in particular what mediums of communication they use in their attempt to follow up with a contact made. Also, looking at the proportion of respondents that have a follow-up plan and those that don’t engage in follow ups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– On my own OR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– With others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which of the following describe the ways you behave after your attendance at a networking event? (Select as many as apply)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Sort through business cards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Call new contacts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Add contacts to online social networking site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Send emails to new contacts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Meet with new contacts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is your organisation a member of Western Sydney Business Connection?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What type of membership does your organisation have with Western Sydney Business Connection?</td>
<td>As above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Platinum Member</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Gold Member</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Silver Member</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Question</td>
<td>Justification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Manufacturing Member</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– ABC Member</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which social networking sites are you a member of? (Select as many as apply)</td>
<td>Understanding the types of social networking sites that respondents are using both on a personal as well as an organisation level gives an insight into the online social networking that is taking place in conjunction with the interpersonal face-to-face networking that happens at facilitated events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Facebook</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– LinkedIn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Twitter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As above</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which social networking sites is your organisation a member of? (Select as many as apply)</td>
<td>This may be indicative of the number of new contacts made at any given event which prompted an exchange of business cards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Facebook</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– LinkedIn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Twitter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On average when you attend an event how many business cards do you collect? (Write number in box provided)</td>
<td>Understanding how many events the respondent has been to in the past 12 months gives me a sense of the regularity of their event attendance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of events you have attended in the last 12 months? (Write number in box provided)</td>
<td>This question is included to understand how long respondents have been attending events, which could be interesting to cross-match with other responses as experience of event attendance is likely to have an impact on the way in which events are approached.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long have you been attending networking events?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YOUR DETAILS</td>
<td>Understanding the background of the respondent.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 9: Co-analysis of Multiple Methods

Table A9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method / Information within each Method</th>
<th>Co-analysis with Observation Notes</th>
<th>Co-analysis with Photographs</th>
<th>Co-analysis with Follow-up Interviews</th>
<th>Co-analysis with Surveys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observation notes (transcripts of recording and field notes):</td>
<td>* Descriptions of subjects’ networking and interactions with networking space</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Overview of event context</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Macro behaviour patterns at event</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Real-time descriptions of behaviour of those observed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Reflection of observations post event</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Reflections of own networking experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographs (of focal participants, event space and participants within):</td>
<td>* Prompts for eliciting discussion</td>
<td>* Record context / environment of events</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Of subject’s networking behaviour</td>
<td>* Verification of notes</td>
<td>* Visual descriptions of behaviour occurring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Of generic networking</td>
<td>* Each provides framework for other</td>
<td>* Body language / unconscious expression of inner state</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>* Interview Prompts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method / Information within each Method</td>
<td>Co-analysis with Observation Notes</td>
<td>Co-analysis with Photographs</td>
<td>Co-analysis with Follow-up Interviews</td>
<td>Co-analysis with Surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcripts of and reflection upon follow-up interviews:</td>
<td>* Clarification of ambiguous behaviour</td>
<td>* Facilitation of interviews</td>
<td>Convergence of perception of:</td>
<td>* Summaries of those attending events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Own network description</td>
<td>* Comparison of observed behaviour with recorded</td>
<td>* Identification of patterns of responses to photos</td>
<td>* network behaviour descriptions</td>
<td>* Demographics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Networking event behaviour (pre, during and post)</td>
<td>* Aid for interpretation of behaviour, including observation of responses to discussing networking</td>
<td>* Comparison of responses to different photo types</td>
<td>* motivations / attitudes</td>
<td>* Patterns of event attendance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Value of networks</td>
<td>* Observation of response to photos during interview</td>
<td>* Cross-comparison and verification of findings emerging from each</td>
<td>* value of networking</td>
<td>* Network behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey questions:</td>
<td>* Comparison of perceived networking with observed (aggregate patterns)</td>
<td>* Assessment of representativeness of photos</td>
<td>* Value of network</td>
<td>* Segmentation of attendees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Nature of network</td>
<td></td>
<td>* Assessment of validity of questionnaire</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Event attendance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Network behaviour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Value of networks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Demographics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 10: Sample of Observational Cross-reference Tables

Table A10.1 Sample Macro Perspective Cross-reference Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>ABC Lunar Event (02/02/12)</th>
<th>Linked Observation</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Photo #</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1398</td>
<td>Man putting on his name tag</td>
<td>People slowly registering. Some people checking the registration table to see if they recognise any names.</td>
<td>Initial event phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1399</td>
<td>Man walking across the lobby to join the other participants near the function room entrance</td>
<td>People mostly gravitating towards the function area of the room/lobby.</td>
<td>Initial event phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1402</td>
<td>Lady organising pamphlets on table</td>
<td>Stalls being set up with pamphlets.</td>
<td>Networking distractions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1404</td>
<td>People standing in small groups.</td>
<td>Small groups of 3-4 beginning to form. Open body language in the way that they are not closing off the circle.</td>
<td>Group configuration and social interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1407</td>
<td>People standing in small groups.</td>
<td>Very few people here early on. Mainly congregating in groups of 2–3.</td>
<td>Group configuration and social interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1414</td>
<td>Man standing alone using his phone</td>
<td>Photo of someone standing by himself then after some social awkwardness starts using his phone.</td>
<td>Networking distractions Social awkwardness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1417</td>
<td>Event room</td>
<td>Event room is quite narrow. It is obvious that the nature and structure of the room is dictating the way that people move around it. Quite difficult to move around the room.</td>
<td>Event space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1430</td>
<td>Waiter serving drinks</td>
<td>Drinks being served. Quite common.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1431</td>
<td>Small group of people standing in a tight circle</td>
<td>Standing in a close-knit circle. Not conducive to letting anyone else in.</td>
<td>Group configuration and social interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1444</td>
<td>Sponsor banners</td>
<td>All around the room they have banners of the event sponsors; something that they usually do. But are people taking notice? Not sure.</td>
<td>Event space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo #</td>
<td>Linked Observation</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1449</td>
<td>Event room</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1451</td>
<td>Lighting is quite dim but that may be due to the nature of an evening event. No background music. Tables are along the outside allowing people to move in the centre. Drinks coming around to people. Lots of talking going on. Seems to be a male dominance here. People are dressed in professional business attire. People are liking / reacting favourably to the Chinese New Year gift.</td>
<td>Ambience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1457</td>
<td>Attendees standing in groups</td>
<td>Group configuration and social interaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1466</td>
<td>Attendees standing in the lobby</td>
<td>Event space and movement of attendees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1472</td>
<td>Spill over of guests into the lobby/foyer as more people arrive.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1463</td>
<td>Large group of attendees standing together</td>
<td>Group configuration and social interaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Difficult for attendees to make their way around the room due to the structure and space limitations. Seems to be a crowded congestion. People are not moving all the way down the narrow foyer. Attendees staying with the people that they came in with.</td>
<td>Event space and movement of attendees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Sydney Thunder Breakfast (03/11/11)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Photo #</strong></td>
<td><strong>Photographs: What Is Happening?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Linked Observation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Code</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>153–160</td>
<td>Set up of the event space. Natural lighting from the stadium. Sydney Thunder banners, WSBC banners, seating area set up. Large space</td>
<td>Heavenly branded with Sydney Thunder. The colour coordination/theme is spread throughout the event.</td>
<td>Event space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>162</td>
<td>Early attendees greeting each other</td>
<td>Event has started and people are starting to register. I haven’t yet located my two focus people.</td>
<td>Initial event phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>179–180</td>
<td>People registering at the table and picking up their name tags</td>
<td>Starting to work my way around the room to take photographs. It looks like people are going to those that they know.</td>
<td>Initial event phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>181</td>
<td>Small group of attendees</td>
<td>Mostly everyone is staring off into the stadium as opposed to facing each other. People are in small groups of 2 and 3. Looks a little awkward. More engagement is with the surroundings then with others.</td>
<td>Social interaction and familiarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>185</td>
<td>People standing facing the view as oppose to each other</td>
<td>Background conversations consisting of a lot of “Hi, how you going, nice to see you” Waiters walking around with finger breakfast snacks for attendees.</td>
<td>Event space and social interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>187</td>
<td>Focus Participant 1 just arrived he joined Peter’s group</td>
<td>Social interaction and familiarity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>193</td>
<td>Some people on their phones, some people standing alone and some in small groups</td>
<td>Background conversations consisting of a lot of “Hi, how you going, nice to see you” Waiters walking around with finger breakfast snacks for attendees.</td>
<td>Social interaction and familiarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>194</td>
<td></td>
<td>Networking distractions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>198</td>
<td>Focus Participant 2 talking to a male attendee</td>
<td>Taking a photo of Focus Participant 2 talking to a male attendee. Taking some photos of him and the man he is talking to.</td>
<td>Social interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>205</td>
<td>Focus Participant 2 and the same male attendee laughing, still standing together</td>
<td>Focus Participant 2 is still standing with the male attendee. They seem to be socialising and engaged.</td>
<td>Social interaction and familiarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>202–204</td>
<td>Three men standing in very close proximity to each other but they don’t seem to be engaged in any conversation</td>
<td>Three people here standing by themselves, not really talking. Body language suggests that they are just waiting around and not really using the time.</td>
<td>Limited social interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo #</td>
<td>Linked Observation</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>231</td>
<td>Focus Participant 3 arrived and almost immediately starts talking to his friend</td>
<td>They seem to know each other.</td>
<td>Social interaction and familiarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>235</td>
<td>Focus Participant 3 moved to the breakfast line with his friend</td>
<td>Focus Participant 1 has moved to a different group of attendees interacting with 3 other male attendees.</td>
<td>Social interaction, familiarity and movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>257</td>
<td>Focus Participant 1 has moved on to a different group</td>
<td>Focus Participant 1 has moved to a different group of attendees interacting with 3 other male attendees.</td>
<td>Social interaction, gender and movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>263</td>
<td>Female attendee searching through hand bag</td>
<td>Female attendee looks completely removed from the event with her back to everyone and standing alone.</td>
<td>Networking distraction Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>276</td>
<td>Focus Participant 2 has just started to talk to someone in the coffee line, he just started up a conversation with them which is really interesting</td>
<td>Sam took a walk around the room he went from one point to another and now talking to someone in the line. Sam just exchanged business cards with the guy in the coffee line. That is something to follow up on.</td>
<td>Social interaction, gender, movement and business card exchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>311–314</td>
<td>Focus Participant 3 standing with the same person and his body language doesn’t look very engaged. Arms folded</td>
<td>Focus Participant 3 is still in the same spot, arms crossed, doesn’t seem too open for anyone to join into the conversation with him and his friend, so body language is very much closed off.</td>
<td>Limited social interaction, movement and closed body language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A10.3  Sample of Single Perspective Cross-reference Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Business Leader Luncheon with NSW Small Business Commissioner (21/03/2012)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Event Preparation: The Researcher</td>
<td>My role during this event was to step into the shoes of the networker to document and reflect on my experiences. During this event I put down my camera and was not completely experiencing this event through the lens of an observer/researcher. I was now deliberately and purposefully engaging within the networking space. It is important to note that a third-party photographer was at the event for the purpose of tracking my movements throughout the event as well as capturing the main activities of the event; i.e. networking space/environment, guest speakers, anything they found interesting, photos of attendees interacting. These photographs were taken with the intention of aiding in my post-event reflections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event Preparation: The Networker</td>
<td>Given the type of event I wore business attire, brought along my business card, ensured I didn’t carry a handbag: this is something I picked up, not only having observed women at networking events but also when I later interviewed them. It was apparent that juggling a handbag in one hand and a drink in the other can make it quite difficult to greet people and exchange business cards. Aim: To get my name out there as a credible researcher in business / marketing / networking. Small experiments: – Standing alone – Approaching someone who is standing alone – Standing in a large group and a small group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post-event Reflections: Notes</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I recognised another early attendee and went over to say hello. I was anxious about being at the event as a networker as this was the first time.</td>
<td>Approaching some familiar attendees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As soon as I entered the event I registered and collected my name tag.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three people in a group seem optimal.</td>
<td>Group size and optimal interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standing in a group of 5 or more I would continue to have conversations with only one of the people in the group. It would be hard to carry a conversation in a larger group.</td>
<td>Group size and optimal interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking around the networking event with my drink.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There was little exchange of business cards. Spoke to the gentleman who I was sitting next to. We identified people who we knew in common.</td>
<td>Business card exchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoke to lots of people at this event (approximately 15).</td>
<td>Social interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was approached by and had a chat with two ladies who worked at TAFE. They seemed quite interested in my research and were wondering how they could involve their students in similar types of events but first they wanted to build the students networking skills.</td>
<td>Social interaction and gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I approached an older gentleman who was standing alone near the dining tables, which was a distance away from the networking space. We causally spoke about the “good old days”.</td>
<td>Social interaction and gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I approached two young men who were both from St George. We spoke about attending networking events and I asked them if they had a chance to go off and meet other people. One of the men was actually being mentored by the other as it was his first event.</td>
<td>Social interaction and gender Mentoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-event Reflections: Notes</td>
<td>Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I made a point to approach one of the research participants who happened to be at the event. We spoke about my research and his current new business development. It felt really nice to talk to someone I already knew. I felt anxious and after having finished the conversation and moving on I felt a sense of achievement in that I had another face-to-face interaction with this person, which almost felt like it added to the strength of our relationship.</td>
<td>Social interaction and approaching familiar participants Managing anxiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General topics of conversation during networking included:</td>
<td>Conversation topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– My research area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– What their business is</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– What experiences they have at these events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 11: Ranked Concept List from Figure 4.13

Table A11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranked Concept List</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name-like Concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WSBC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word-like Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>probably</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>look</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>talking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>looking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opportunity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 12: Merged Concepts

Table A12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts to Merge</th>
<th>Resulting Concept</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Event and Events</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look and Looking</td>
<td>Look</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk and Talking</td>
<td>Talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use and Used</td>
<td>Use</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Appendix 13: Removed Concepts

## Table A13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Removed Concepts</th>
<th>Justification for Removing Concept</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Couple</td>
<td>Used to describe the amount of questions left to be asked, or photos to be discussed. This concept does not add much meaning to the context of this study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel</td>
<td>A word used regularly in conversational discourse. No semantic meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guess</td>
<td>A word used regularly in conversational discourse. No semantic meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guy</td>
<td>Used when refereeing to someone whose name was either forgotten or not relevant in the example or story being shared. Doesn’t really hold much meaning to the context of this study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having</td>
<td>This word had no semantic meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obviously</td>
<td>Used frequently to indicate level of assurance to a statement made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>This word is often picked up as one of the highest ranking concepts in Leximancer analysis, particularly when analysing transcripts related to social science research. This is such an overused word that it loses all meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably</td>
<td>Used frequently to indicate level of assurance to a statement made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuff</td>
<td>A word used regularly in conversational discourse. No semantic meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sure</td>
<td>A word said to often confirm something, e.g. “Yeah sure”. This concept does not add much meaning to the context of this study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take</td>
<td>This word had no semantic meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terms</td>
<td>Used frequently in the expression “in terms of”. This concept does not add much meaning to the context of this study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things</td>
<td>A word used regularly in conversational discourse. No semantic meaning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 14: Survey Cluster Analysis

To profile event attendees’ behaviours before, during and after events, the items indicated as ‘Micro-level Behaviour’ in Section 4.4 Table 4.6 were analysed using cluster analysis. These items are concerned with the specific behaviours before, during and after networking events. The clusters were then examined to ascertain the nature of the participants within them.

Since it is not possible to know \textit{a priori} the probable number of clusters and their seed points, a hierarchical clustering technique was selected initially. Non-hierarchical techniques (e.g. k-mean algorithm, as applied by Helsen, Jedidi & DeSarbo 1993, as well as Day, Fox & Huszagh 1988) are known to be very sensitive to the choice of initial seeds. Simulation studies have shown that the non-hierarchical clustering algorithms perform poorly when random initial seeds are chosen (Hair et al. 1995; Sharma 1996).

Analyses were run separately on the before, during and after event behaviours.

Number of clusters was identified using the hierarchical clustering technique and examining the dendogram. Using squared Euclidean distances and Ward’s clustering algorithm, several solutions were examined to determine the number of clusters to be extracted (as suggested by Cavusgil, Kiyak & Yeniyurt 2004) with the number confirmed by the hierarchal clusters solutions (Wong, Wilkinson & Young 2010).

Coherent cluster solutions were found for before, during and after event behaviour. Specifically, there are three clear clusters for before event behaviour, three for during event behaviour and two for after event behaviour. Differences between the clusters in the three solutions were measured by the F-statistics, and were significant.

Table A14.1 presents a description of the clusters emerging from the hierarchical cluster analysis. The resulting clusters are of reasonable size (as each respondent appears in each, in one cluster in each category). Cluster centroids were used to interpret the clusters. Each cluster has been assigned a name representing the mean values of the objects contained in the cluster of the variables (as recommended by Malhotra, Birks & Wills 2012).
The cluster descriptions indicate that there are distinctive behavioural profiles for event attendees at all three stages. Before event behaviour preparation differs mostly according to amount of preparation done; for example, in Cluster 1 there is active preparation, in Cluster 2 preparation is minimal and in Cluster 3 preparation is non-existent. Event behaviour also differs according to cluster. In Cluster 1 business card exchange is the focus, in Cluster 2 interpersonal exchange is central and in Cluster 3 both forms of interaction are used. The table also shows that post-event behaviour clusters also differ; in that different follow-up media is used.

Table A14.1  Cluster Labels for Micro-level Behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster Number</th>
<th>Cluster Size</th>
<th>Cluster Name</th>
<th>Cluster Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cluster Analysis One: Event Preparation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1 (from V1, V2, V3, V4, V5)</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>Strategic Preparation</td>
<td>Extremely proactive in preparing for events. Prepares by of knowing who will be attending, where they may be seated and by developing strategies to meet particular people. People in this cluster will go out of their way to research attendees before attending an event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2 (from V1, V2, V4)</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>Basic Preparation</td>
<td>Laid-back in preparation for events, they are interested knowing who is attending and possibly where they may be sitting; however, that is where the event preparation stops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3 (from V6)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>No Preparation</td>
<td>No type of preparation prior to attending an event is undertaken.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cluster Analysis Two: Interaction Focus at Events</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1 (from V1, V2, V5, V6)</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>At Event: Business Card Exchanger</td>
<td>Key behaviour at event is the exchange of business cards with others during the event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2 (from V2, V3, V4)</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>At Event: Maintaining and Making Contacts</td>
<td>Key behaviour at event is interpersonal exchange including both talking to people they know as well as meeting new people during the event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3 (from V2, V3, V4, V6)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>At Event: The Active Business Card Giver</td>
<td>Mixed behaviour at event includes handing out business cards, talking to people they know and meeting new people. However, they refrain from asking for business cards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cluster Analysis Three: Post-event Follow Up</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1 (from V1, V3, V4)</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>Post-event Online Follow-up</td>
<td>Focus is on following up with contacts via online media such as sending emails and adding contacts on to social networking sites.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The nature of the members of each cluster was identified using cross-tabulation analysis of the clusters with the demographic variables including number of networking events attended in the past 12 months, number of years in the workforce, gender and industry type.

Table A14.2 summarises these. For the first three demographics the chi-square statistic tests the association; for the fourth, as before, a manual examination of the tabulation was undertaken to see if certain industries were more inclined towards a membership in a cluster.

The demographics that are associated with cluster membership are somewhat different than those that influenced respondents’ networking approach, perceived value and goals. As before, these results are presented together so that the overall patterns can be considered.

Association specifically at all three stages cluster membership is related to number of events attended in the last 12 months. Specifically, cluster one includes more frequent attendees are more likely to be in clusters that are characterised by more preparation, more card exchange and interpersonal follow-ups (see Table A14.1 for full descriptions of clusters). In the during-event behaviour, females are more likely to be in the card exchanges cluster and males in the interpersonal exchanges cluster. Neither industry type nor years in workforce appear to be associated with any of these clusters’ behaviours.
### Table A14.2  Relationship between Cluster Membership and Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster</th>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>No. of Events Attended in the Last 12 Months</th>
<th>No. of Years in the Workforce</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Industry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Accepted: C1 (highly prepared) are highly likely to attend 4+ events</td>
<td>Rejected: No significant difference in clusters’ experience</td>
<td>Rejected: No significant difference in clusters’ gender</td>
<td>Not tested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Pre-event Behaviour</td>
<td></td>
<td>Accepted: C1 (card exchangers) are highly likely to attend 4+ events, C2 (making and building contacts) attend fewest events</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
<td>Accepted: C1 (card exchangers) is predominantly female, C2 (making and building contacts) is predominantly male</td>
<td>Indication of association: Manufacturing more likely in C2 and not C1 NFP and Charity more likely in C1 Recruitment &amp; Consultancy more likely in C3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 During-event Behaviour</td>
<td></td>
<td>Accepted: C1 (online) attend relatively fewer events than C2 (face to face)</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
<td>Not tested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Post-event Behaviour</td>
<td></td>
<td>Accepted: C1 (highly prepared) are highly likely to attend 4+ events</td>
<td>Rejected: No significant difference in clusters’ experience</td>
<td>Rejected: No significant difference in clusters’ gender</td>
<td>Not tested</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall the table indicates that the number of events attended varies by cluster for before-, during- and after-event behaviours. Years in workforce is distributed evenly – that is, there is no difference by cluster – and during-event behaviour differs by gender but this is not associated with before or after behaviour.

To explore whether attitudes towards what events drive (and/or is driven by) event behaviour, chi-square analysis of the association between respondents’ perceived value of events in terms of whether they help build networks or contacts and cluster membership was undertaken. Results are presented in Table A14.3. This shows that cluster membership is not related to perceptions of events helping to build networks. However, perceptions of events as helping to build contacts are associated with
preparation, during-event behaviour and follow up. Interestingly it is those who prepare only to a moderate degree that are most positive about the value of events in building contacts. Perhaps even more interestingly, those who focus on interpersonal exchanges while at events see the least value in events for contact building. And, those who follow up with contacts made using personalised, direct contact are likely to be only moderate in their perceptions of the value of events for contact-making.

### Table A14.3  Relationship between Cluster Membership and Event Attitudes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster Type</th>
<th>Event Value</th>
<th>Events Help Build Networks</th>
<th>Events Help Build Contacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Pre-event Behaviour</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
<td></td>
<td>Accepted: Those responding highly positively are highly likely to be in C2 (Basic Preparation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 During-event Behaviour</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
<td></td>
<td>Accepted: Those in middle of scale likely to be in C1 (At Event: Business Card Exchanger), those who strongly disagree likely to be in C2 (At Event: Maintaining and Making Contacts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Post-event Behaviour</td>
<td>Rejected: No significance but indication that those who strongly disagree are likely to be in C1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Accepted: Those in middle of scale likely to be in C2 (Post-event Face-to-face Follow-up)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>