POWER AND POLITICS IN THE INTEGRATION OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS AFTER A MERGER

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ABSTRACT

Despite an increase in studies on the role of information systems after a merger, the current literature tends to focus on structure and strategy and is largely silent on social and contextual factors, particularly on the significance of power and politics in the integration of information systems after a merger. This research study addresses the research gap identified by examining how power is exercised during post-merger information systems integration, what political activity manifests and how power dynamics that were inherent in the merging partners are transformed after the integration of the information systems functions of the merging organisations. This study was conducted in the interpretive paradigm through an in-depth case study at a division of a firm that has recently gone through the process of integrating its information systems function following a merger. The theoretical base of this study is Stewart Clegg's Circuits of Power framework. A conceptual framework based on Clegg's theory guides the data collection and data analysis. Primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews and some secondary data was also used to triangulate the data. This study confirms that power and politics do indeed have an influence on post-merger information systems integration. This study also reveals that there are contextual factors that sanction for the exercise of power and political activity to manifest. This study further shows that the integration of information systems functions can also change the dispositional and facilitative power of actors. Lastly, the study shows how power plays a role in the institutionalisation of an integrated system. Considering that there is a lack of empirical studies that examine the power and politics in the integration of information systems functions after a merger, this study provides some groundwork for continued focus in this area. Another theoretical contribution of this research is its adaptation of Clegg's framework to study power dynamics in the post-merger IS integration context. This study highlights to information systems practitioners the need to be cognisant that post-merger IS integration of firms that have different organisational structure and cultures is can alter power existing dynamics.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Mergers and acquisitions (M&As) have become popular over last few decades for organisations as a mechanism for growth, particularly in terms of scope, increasing capacity and market share, diversification through acquiring new products, technologies and skills as well as increasing geographical footprint (Haspeslagh & Jemison 1992; Pitkethly, Faulkner & Child 2003; Walter & Barney 1990). As information systems (IS) continue to play a strategic function in many organisations, the integration of information systems functions of the merging firms has gained prominence over time (Robbins & Stylianou, 1999). It is crucial that IS of the merging organisations be integrated properly as corporations continue to rely on information systems for accurate, dependable and up-to-date information,

It is often suggested that successfully integrating the IS functions of the merging entities may offer advantages that may support the underlying motives of the merger such as enhancing the organisation's competitive position, improving the organisation's financial position and channelling new business (Lin, Lo & Yang 2010; Robbins & Stylianou, 1999). Poor IS integration has been cited as one of the main reasons why some mergers fail (Mehta & Hirschheim 2004).

Several studies in management literature (e.g. Cartwright & Cooper, 1990; Riad, 2005; Schraeder & Self, 2003) have examined the combination of people and organisational cultures in the context of mergers and acquisitions. These studies allude to the fact that considerations of how power and politics play out during and after a merger may have a bearing on the success of a merger. For example, Schraeder and Self (2003) noted that the lack of efforts to assess cultural compatibility of the merging firms could have detrimental effects, while Cartwright and Cooper observed that "mergers are often power games and the seductive appeal of power is well accepted" (1990, p.66).

Despite an increase in studies that focus on IS integration after a merger, the current literature on post-merger IS integration tends to focus on structure and strategy and not social and contextual factors (Robbins & Stylianou 1999). More specifically, the role that power and politics play in the post-merger IS integration context has not been adequately examined, even though several IS scholars have emphasized the importance studying of power and politics in various contexts (e.g. Allen, Kern, & Mattison, 2002; Markus, 1983; Romi, Awad,

& Elkordy, 2010) as these studies can assist in explaining why information systems are adopted, institutionalised or resisted and rejected.

1.2. Problem Statement

The attributes of a merger context make it likely that the distribution of power through politics will have a different IS integration outcomes relative to other contexts; in corporate mergers power bases are likely to shift as mergers may lead to change in structures of authority and sources of power requisite to effect organisational change (Mehta & Hirschheim 2004). Even though information systems play a critical role in mergers, particularly in industries and organisations where the role of information systems is strategic, there have been very few studies that have examined the role of power and politics in the integration of IS functions even though the role of power and politics is often acknowledged in post-merger IS integration literature (Alaranta et al. 2005; Mehta & Hirschheim 2004).

The integration of IS functions after a merger typically includes the integration of IT skills, IT systems, and business processes. As information systems are carriers of power, if the phenomenon of power remains inadequately studied, IS researchers may not be able to assess the extent to which power dynamics that were inherent in the IS systems of the merging companies may transform after the integration of IS functions. In the absence of studies that specifically study power dynamics in the post-merger context, both IS researchers and practitioners may not be able to adequately explain why information systems change that is brought about by post-merger information systems change may be adopted and institutionalised, or why in some cases such change and systems are rejected.

Given the rising prominence of IS integration in M&A practice, it is necessary that the phenomena of power and politics in this context be studied. The research problem that this study aims to address to contribute to current IS research by studying power dynamics in the integration of IS functions after a merger, how power dynamics change after the integration of IS functions and what role power plays in the ultimate institutionalisation of the integrated IS function.

1.3. Research Questions

The purpose of this research was to investigate the phenomena of power and politics in a post-merger merger information systems context, specifically how and politics does impact

on the implementation of post-merger systems integration and that power dynamics inherent in the merging organisations can change/transform after the merging organisations have integrated their information systems. The focus of the research is informed by Burrell & Morgan's (1979) interpretive conception of power that social reality does not hold a material ontological status, but is instead a product of the subjective and inter-subjective experience of individuals

In the interpretive perspective (ibid), power relations in organisations are understood to be embedded in organisational structure, cultural values, work processes and IT systems (Keen 1981; Lin & Silva 2005; Markus 1984; Walsham 1991). The aim of the research is to understand what power struggles and political activity emerge in the integration of IS functions (i.e. IT personnel, IT applications, IT infrastructure and business users) of two merging entities and how IS change in this context provides an occasion for the restructuring or changes in distribution of power amongst various stakeholders. The focus is therefore narrowed down to the following research questions:

RQ1: *How is power exercised in the integration of IS functions of two merging entities and what political activity manifests?*

RQ2: *In what way are power dynamics transformed after integrating IS functions of merging firms due to change in organisational norms, rules, values and work practices?*

RQ3: *What role does power play in the institutionalisation of an integrated system?*

1.4. Definition of Key Terms

In order avoid ambiguity and confusion; the following are the definitions the key terms and how they are used in this research report.

- *Information Systems* –the 'term information systems' in this broadly incorporates IT systems (databases and processing), IT infrastructure (networks, operating systems, hardware), IT personnel as well as mechanisms put in place to support to co-ordination and management of systems, infrastructure and IT personnel.
- *Information Systems Integration* – Information systems integration is thus that of process that enables functioning as a whole of two or more different information systems (i.e. IT systems, IT processes IT structure, IT infrastructure and personnel).

In theory, this integration of IS functions should also involve some sort of socio-cultural integration among the different groups of the merging entities.

- *Post-merger IS integration* – post-merger integration refers to the integration of information systems functions of two merging firms.

1.5. Structure of Research Report

The rest of the research report is structured as follows:

- *Chapter 2* – provides a review of the literature of post-merger IS integration and theoretical perspectives of power, politics in IS literature. The chapter also discusses the Circuits of Power Framework, which forms the theoretical bases for a conceptual framework that guides the research.
- *Chapter 3* – This chapter outlines the philosophical paradigm under which this study is conducted as well as the research strategy and techniques that were used to carry out the research project. A conceptual framework based on Clegg's (1989) circuits of power framework which forms the theoretical basis for data collection and analysis is also presented.
- *Chapter 4* – In this chapter a narration and interpretation of the case is presented in themes that emerged from the conceptual framework.
- *Chapter 5* – The aim of this this chapter is to provide a synthesis of the research findings in relation to the research questions that this study addresses and provides a discussion of implications for practice.
- *Chapter 6* – The last chapter provides the conclusion to the study and includes a review of the findings and analysis, a discussion of the contributions of the study as well as potential future research directions

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The objective of this chapter is to establish a baseline review of the literature by firstly providing an overview of mergers and acquisitions, examining the current state of research of post-merger IS integration literature, and proving a theoretical background on the concepts of power and politics and how they have been studied in IS research. This chapter is organised as follows.

- S*ection 2.1* sets the scene by proving a background on mergers and acquisitions.
- *Section 2.2* offers background on post-merger IS integration, the current state of research and the identified research gap that this study addresses.
- The *Section 2.3* provides theoretical background by discussing the various types of power, paradigms for studying power in IS research and theories that are used to study power in IS research.
- *Section 2.4* outlines the circuits of power framework, which is the theoretical framework on which this study is based on.
- *Section 2.5* concludes.

2.1. Overview of Mergers and Acquisitions

In academic and business literature, mergers are usually referred to alongside acquisitions and are sometimes synonymously referred to as mergers and acquisitions (M&As). A merger usually involves a combination of two previously separate organisations into a new entity while an acquisition is a purchase of a target organisation for assimilation or incorporation into the organisation that is doing the purchase (Boeh & Beamish 2007). Some of the goals often cited as reasons for merging are to improve operational competences, to obtain access to new markets and new products and increase market share. Due to the advancement of technology, mergers do not occur only for organisational reasons, but also for technological reasons as well (Ellis & Lamont 2004; Harrel & Higgins 2002; Shrivastava 1986).

Mergers and Acquisitions (M&As) are usually classified by the relatedness of the business activities of the combining parties as well as the integration types. There three common types of M&As (by relatedness) are: horizontal, vertical and conglomerate mergers (Galaskiewicz 1985). Horizontal mergers are those of firms that are in the same line of business, potentially competing with each other as they have similar value chains and sell similar products; such merger transactions usually aim to increase the dimensions in the market share, leverage on economies of scale and in some cases combine rare skills (Galaskiewicz 1985). With vertical

mergers on the other hand, the merging organisations are typically in the same line of production where a supplier-buyer relationship already exists or could exist (Galaskiewicz 1985). The objective of such transactions is typically to gain other levels of the production chain (Walter & Barney 1990). In the case of conglomerates, the merging entities are not in the same line of business and there is neither a buyer-seller relationship nor technical or distribution relationship that exists between the two firms; the objective of these mergers is usually to broaden the portfolio of industrial activities and to reduce market risk (Galaskiewicz 1985).

M&A transactions are also categorised by their integration types, i.e. the extent to which the merging entities integrate their business activities. M&A integration types are: absorption, preservation, holding and symbiosis (McKiernan & Merali 1995). The first strategy, i.e. absorption consists of unification in the management of the merging entities. In the case of absorption, there is a low requirement for operational autonomy and a higher requirement for strategic interdependence (Ellis & Lamont 2004). The second integration strategy, holding, is based on the cross-transfer of strategically chosen assets and capabilities between the firms while still retaining a certain level of autonomy of the firms, i.e. this type represents critical need for both operational autonomy and strategic interdependence. The third integration strategy is preservation, a strategy where the purchaser seeks to foster the capabilities of the acquired firm while preserving its autonomy (Ellis & Lamont 2004; Wijnhoven, Spil, Stegwee & Fa 2006). Preservation is characterized by a limited requirement of strategic interdependence of the firms involved but a high need for operational autonomy in both firms, thus allowing the two merging entities to be able to continue to operate independently after the merger (Ellis & Lamont 2004). The fourth strategy, i.e. symbiosis involves a situation where the merging forms both operate independently and there is intention of integrating the two firms (McKiernan & Merali 1995).

Existing M&A literature tends to focus more on the financial aspects of the merger rather than the subsequent process of integrating the merging entities, in cases where researchers study the post-merger phase the focus tends to be on issues such as culture fit, integration strategies, business strategy alignment and strategic fit (Cartwright & Cooper 1990). Even though there has been a slight increase in studies that focus on post-merger IS integration over the past few years, there are still very few studies that examine the organisational and strategic context under with this IS integration takes place (Baker & Niederman, 2014;

Hagedoorn & Duysters 2002). There have been increased calls by researchers for more research output in these areas as information systems continue to play a more pivotal role in organisations particularly and as some have been publicising the strategic advantage the total integration of IS capabilities (Giacomazzi, Panella, Pernici & Sansoni 1997; Wijnhoven et al. 2006).

2.2. Post-merger Information Systems Integration

The role that Information Systems (IS) plays in the merging firms before a merger and its potential role after the merger is often a consideration. In mergers and acquisitions, information systems may have a reactive or pro-active role (McKiernan & Merali 1995). The role is considered reactive if information systems need to change to accommodate other operational considerations in an organisation and pro-active if it is viewed as the vehicle for organisational change or when it has been a primary consideration during the structuring of the merger deal (McKiernan & Merali 1995). In instances where the functions of the IS department are considered to have a pro-active role after a merger has happened, successfully integrating the IS of the merging entities is usually expected to offer immediate advantages post the merger in that the merged organisation can start reaping the positive outcomes such as improving the strategic position of the company (Metha & Hirschheim 2004; Robbins & Stylianou 1999).

2.2.1. Background of Information Systems Integration

As highlighted in the introductory chapter, the definition of information systems integration that this study adopts is that it is a process that enables the functioning as a whole of two or more different information systems (i.e. IT systems, IT processes IT structure, IT infrastructure and personnel). This integration can also involve the socio-cultural integration of various groups (Cartwright & Cooper 1990).

According to Wijnhoven et al. (2006), there are three levels of IS integration or desired levels of integration or integration objectives: complete integration, partial integration and co-existence. The most ambitions integration model of the three is complete integration and it is usually the one that takes the most time to implement as it seeks to fully incorporate separate IS function such that they function as one (Giacomazzi et al. 1997). Complete integration is not feasible in large organisations with decentralised systems, but may be viable in smaller organisations or organisational units (Wijnhoven et al. 2006). Partial integration on the other

hand, identifies systems, structures and processes which should be integrated first and those than can be integrated later; the decision on what to integrate first is based on strategic priorities that are set by the merged entities, usually in cases where some co-operation can be realized to be more beneficial in some processes other than others (Giacomazzi et al. 1997; Wijnhoven et al. 2006). Co-existence refers to the integration level where the two IS functions of the merging partners remain largely unchanged and continue to operate autonomously. This strategy realizes very marginal operational synergies and is usually considered undesirable in the long term due to the great costs associated with maintaining two redundant IS functions (Giacomazzi et al. 1997).

Giacomazzi et al. (1997) distinguish between four approaches to IT integration: renewal, take-over, standardisation, and co-existence. Renewal involves the discontinuation of information systems of both the merging organisations and replacing them with a completely new one (ibid). In the case of a take-over, the IT of one of the partners is closed one and the IT of the other partner is used. This strategy allows for a faster speed of integration, however this scenario also allows for possible conflict and power struggles as different parties may prefer to maintain the status quo (Giacomazzi et al. 1997). Standardisation, sometimes referred to as 'best-of-breed' involves integrating the best parts of both ITs as the baseline for the new organisation Giacomazzi et al. (1997). Individual parts from each system are thus integrated; this method involves abolishing some of the parts of both the partners and replacing them with new ones. In the case of coexistence, the IS functions of both systems are preserved and they operate in parallel and some periodic synchronisation of the redundant system is done to consolidate data and synchronise the different systems Giacomazzi et al. (1997).

IS researchers have conducted empirical studies on possible integration strategies that may be more appropriate in specific merger conditions in relation to the merger and IS integration objectives. An example of such a study is one by Johnston and Yetton (1996) which investigates conditions under which the absorption model of integration is likely to be implemented and suggests under which contingencies absorption or standardization is likely to be the most effective mode of integration. There appears to be consensus among researchers that there is no one-size fits all approach in terms of which integration approach to take for which merger type or merger integration type, contextual factors such as the

objectives of the merger, market condition, and the desired speed of integration need to be taken into account (Harrel & Higgins 2002; McKiernan & Merali 1995).

2.2.2. Rationale for Integration of Information Systems after a Merger

The integration of the IS functions of merging entities is often said to be desirable, particularly in instances where the role of information systems in the merging firms is a strategic one (Garcia-Canal, Rialp-Criado, Rialp-Criado 2013; McKiernan & Merali 1995). A review of the literature suggests that various researchers offer different reasons why organisations integrate their systems and what their expected outcomes are. The rationale and objectives for IS integration in the literature appear to be based on mostly anecdotal evidence rather than actual empirical findings.

According to Weber and Pilskin, it is imperative that firms that are characterised by high IT-intensity to integrate after a merger as this integration can expect to exploit synergies that can potentially bring high economies of scale in organisational units, functions and standardize business processes and can also decrease redundancy and increase productivity; while the synergy potential and benefits are likely to be smaller in less IT-intensive firms (1995, p 82).

Robbins and Sylaniou state that the rationale for the integration of IS functions should be that such integration should lead to the enhancement of IS capacities in a manner that should improve the strategic position of the merged entity. This should then generate a wide range of positive outcomes such as: improving the competitiveness of the firm, aligning business strategic planning with IS planning, contributing to overall organisational financial performance, providing standardised technologies across organisational units, and improving access to corporate-wide information (1999, p 206).

Lin et al. also mention similar objectives and intended benefits, i.e. that an integrated IS function may lead to establishing architectures for continuous quality improvement and organisational management, reduce IT complexity; however goes further to say that other more secondary reasons may be for integrating IS functions under the same objective can eradicate redundancies, and improve information quality (2010, p. 190).

The rationale and intended objectives of integration IS functions can be classified roughly into three groupings, those that are strategic, operational and technological (Hayes 2005).

Strategic objectives are those that are related to the overall competitive positioning of the organisations, for example that the IS function to support the overall motive of the merger can be considered as strategic objective. Operational objectives are those that seek to improve the efficiency of day-to-day operational activities. Integrating IS functions in order to have a more efficient coordination of production capacity is an example of an operational objective. Technological objectives are those that are aimed at improving IT effectiveness, examples are improving information systems quality and reducing IT complexity.

2.2.3. Current state of Research and Research Gap

Despite the increase in mergers and acquisitions, the challenges of integrating information systems after a merger still remain relevant (Garcia-Canal et al. 2013; McKiernan & Merali 1995; Robbins & Stylianou 1999). Even though there have been numerous empirical studies in management studies about mergers and acquisitions in general, research into post-merger IS integration is still lacking. However, studies that focus on the role of IS in mergers and acquisitions and post-merger IS integration have been steadily increasing over the years (Garcia-Canal et al. 2013; Lin et al. (2010); McKiernan & Merali 1995; Mehta & Hirschheim 2004). A comprehensive categorisation of these studies does not exist, however, according to this researcher, these studies can be classified broadly into four categories according to their research objectives: those that attempt to define post-merger IS integration success; studies that examine factors that lead to post-merger systems integration success; studies that attempt to understand contingencies that link IS integration strategies to merger configurations; and lastly those that are concerned with the bi-directional relationship between IS integration and social structures of organisation.

The first category deals with the definition of post-merger IS success. A few scholars (e.g. Alaranta et al. 2005; Robbins & Stylianou 1999; Stylianou, Jeffries, & Robbins 1996) have defined post-merger IS success. These studies generally tend to build on work of existing IS literature around IS success. Alaranta et al. (2005) broadly define the following as post-merger IS success: user satisfaction with the integrated system quality as well as its use; efficient and effective IS integration management; efficient IS staff integration and the ability of IS to support the underlying motives of the merger. Even though there are anecdotal reports of improved performance following IS integration, according there is still a lack of conclusive empirical evidence to support such claims.

The second category of studies consists of those that focus on factors that lead to post-merger IS integration success, these studies tend to focus on contextual organisational factors that may facilitate or hinder IS integration success. Some of these have found that some of the factors that lead to success of post-merger IS integration are: sufficient IS planning before the merger (McKiernan & Merali 1995), top management support for IS function (Robbins & Stylianou 1999), better communication between the IS and user areas regarding the progress of merger activities and IS participation in merger planning (Stylianou et al. 1996).

The third category of studies describe criteria for selecting different integration types after a merger by considering variables such as the type of merger integration, the objectives of the merger and IS capabilities that exist in both merging companies (e.g. Garcia-Canal et al. 2013; Giacomazzi et al. 1997). The objective of these studies is to suggest models and frameworks that can assist in the post-merger decision making process for IS integration. An example of such a study is one by Garcia-Canal et al. (2013) that constructs an empirical model of a typology of IS integration strategies and desired speed of IS integration; the study finds that the internal relatedness of the IT systems that are being integrated affects the speed of integration and suggests that in the case of absorptions, the most suitable integration strategies are takeovers and standardizations.

The last type of studies are concerned with the reflexive relationship between IS integration and social structures of organisation. These studies typically consider how social aspects of organisation (such as organisational culture, power dynamics) impact adoption, use and institutionalisation of IS integration. (e.g. Lin et al. 2010; Weber & Pliskin 1996). A review of the literature suggests that studies that fall under this category are the scarcest in information systems research. This suggests that there is a need for more studies that could focus on this area of research particularly as it has often been noted that the contextual organisational factors

The literature survey also further indicated even though the role of power and politics is often acknowledged in post-merger IS integration research, there are very few studies which have specifically studied power dynamics in the post-merger IS integration context. One of these few is a study by Mehta & Hirschheim (2005) which examines how the power differentials of the merging entities can influence the IT integration decisions. In IS research several scholars have acknowledged the importance of power and politics in various contexts (e.g. Allen et al.

2002; Markus 1983; Romi et al. 2010). For example IS research that focuses on the role of power and politics has been instrumental in explaining issues of information systems adoption, resistance and institutionalisation.

The lack of studies that focus on power relationships in the post-merger IS integration context constitutes a research gap, particularly due to the fact that researchers have frequently noted that environmental conditions prevalent in the post-merger context such as scarcity of resources, disagreement on important decisions, incongruent goals for merging companies with different cultures create conditions that are ripe for power to be exercised and political activity that seeks to secure preferred outcomes at an inter-personal level or intergroup level to manifest (McKiernan & Merali 1995; Mehta & Hirschheim 2004; Robbins & Stylianou 1999).

In the absence of a satisfactory number studies that specifically focus on power and politics, IS researchers and practitioners may not adequately be able to understand what the determinants of power are, how power is dispensed how politics plays out and the consequences of integrating IS functions of two different entities with different organisational structures and cultures. By examining power relations in the context of post-merger IS integration, IS researchers may be in a better position to understand reasons why some IS integrations projects succeed while others are resisted and fail, and how power influences whether an information system becomes institutionalised or not.

2.3. Theoretical Background

This section provides a theoretical background on the subject of power, firstly by presenting a typology of power and how it is related to politics, followed by a discussion of power and politics in IS research. Then theoretical approaches to studying power are discussed as well at the common theories that are used to study power in information systems research.

2.3.1. A Typology of Power

There are many definitions of power and as many conceptualisations of what power is and how it should be studied. The position that is adopted in this research report is that it is preferable to consider a theoretical classification of power that considers different conceptualisations of power according to general type instead of adopting a view of power that attempts to integrate different conceptualisations into one. As power is relational, this

position is more suitable as it allows power to be studied in a manner that allows the researcher to identify different types of power and how different types of power relate in the context within which power is being studied.

Power is usually associated with abstract concepts such as authority, influence, ability, strength and capacity. The utility of a typology of power should be one that is versatile in terms of classifying contemporary or colloquial conceptions, regardless of their level or abstraction or simplicity. One such typology is one that was advanced by Law (1991). This typology is suitable as it takes into account various accounts of power conceptions, particularly those that are most considered in the study of power in organisations (Clegg, Courpasson & Phillips, 2006). According to Law (1991), conceptions of power fall into four general categories: 'power to', 'power over', 'power storage' and 'power discretion'.

The conceptual notion of 'power to' is based on the premise that power is a circulatory media analogous to money; and that is it exercised to achieve outcomes (Parsons 1961). This type of power is considered to be facilitative in nature, creative and has the capacity to change the nature of things and social relations. According to Law (1991) 'Power to' or 'facilitative power' is enabled by 'symbolic legitimacy' and 'normative order'. Symbolic legitimacy refers to the already established institutional order that makes it valid for power to be deployed with the expectation that others will follow it (Clegg et al. 2006, p. 193). Normative order refers to the institutional order in which actors are socialised to act in a manner that assumes a particular membership based on commonly shared obligations (Clegg et al. 2006, p. 193).

The nature of 'power over' is based on Dahl (1957) conception of power that "A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do" (Dahl 1957, p. 202). This type of power is relational in nature as it involves at least two power actors, i.e. for A to be able to exercise power over B, some sort of relationship between them has to exist. 'Power over' is sometimes referred to as 'causal' power as it represents an exercise of power by actors in a manner that may influence, shape or determine interests of other actors in a manner that is consistent with the interests of those that are exercising power. This form of power is exercised by actors with the view of securing allegiance or compliance and does not necessarily imply outright conflict or resistance (Clegg 1989).

Law's (1991) states that both 'power to' and 'power over' can be stored. The concept of power storage accounts for the conception that power can be 'owned' or possessed. The notion of 'power over' acknowledges the reality that some may be considered more powerful than others, i.e. by virtue of structure and agency the output of 'power to' and 'power over' may differ for different individuals in society, this capacitive form of power rests on the conditions, contingencies and factors that make the position of an agent more or less powerful than others through means that are symbolic and representational (Clegg 2006).

The concept of power storage is an also an acknowledgement of the rationalist conception that power can exist without necessarily being manifested, i.e. power can exist as a capacity. In other words, an agent may possess power, but may not necessarily exercise it. It is for this reason that Law (1991) emphasize that power storage and power discretion should be studied together. The options that are available to agents to exercise power that is stored is what Law (1991) refers to as power discretion, i.e. the capacity to switch on or off 'power to' or 'power over'. In other words, power discretion should be understood as the inherent capability to choose among different ways of action. This discretion is exercised through cautious consideration of the options available and their effect of their consequences.

2.3.2. Power and Politics

Power and politics are often studied together and in some cases both terms are used interchangeably in the literature. As it is with power, various conceptualisations of what politics means are offered. The term 'politics' is used in a variety of contexts, examples are the relationship between society and the state, in situations of conflict between individuals and groups and in group dynamics in organisations (Lin & Silva 2005; Markus 1983; Pettigrew 1977). At its core, politics is associated as one among many systems of influence particularly with regards to how individuals or groups may exert their influence by constructing meaning for what others may perceive and experience thus having deeper focus of the structure of power embedded in the use of language, information and artefacts (Bradshaw-Campbell & Murray 1991).

The conceptualisation of politics that is adopted in this study is one that is proposed by Mintzberg (1985). It is adopted specifically because it is purposely relates power and structure in organisational settings. According to Mintzberg (1985), what constitutes legitimate power in organisations is derived from formally defined rules of authority;

organisations delegate authority and discretion in order to operate, however, this authority and formal parameters that are set out are usually subject to multiple interpretation and may be contested. This this is what Mintzberg (ibid) recognizes as the source of politics, in other words any actions that constitute the exercise of power outside the formal scope of formal rules of authority is considered as politics, or political activity.

Activity that involves the exercise of power fulfil individual interests that is not within the scope of formal boundaries of organisation are undesirable in organisations as political behaviour is considered to be divisive and a source of conflict (Mintzberg 1985, p. 137), thus formal structures in organisations will impose disciplinary mechanisms, such as surveillance, strict reporting structures or sanctions policies to ensure that organisational actors are faithful to the formally defined bounds of rules and authority and that their actions are restricted to those boundaries (Silva 2007, p. 169).

According to Silva (2007), the study of power and politics in organisations presents an epistemological challenge for researchers as politics is considered as something that illegitimate in organisation and should not exist, despite the fact that politics are abound in organisations (Mintzberg 1985). Thus, researchers (e.g. Orlikowski & Baroudi 1991; Silva 2007; Walsham 1991) advocate that the study of power and politics under an epistemological paradigm that emphasises on the interpretation of meanings, intentions and actions is the most appropriate for studying such complex phenomena.

2.3.3. Power and Politics in Information Systems Research

The importance of examining social and contextual factors such as culture, power, structure and strategy in relation to the adoption, implementation and institutionalisation of information systems has been highlighted by a number of scholars in the literature (Lin & Silva 2005; Markus 1983; Walsham 1993). Even though there has been an increase in such studies, organisational power has had the least attention in comparison to organisational culture, structure, and strategy, when investigating information systems related phenomena (Silva 2007). Information systems research into power and politics relating to information systems in organisations did not emerge until the beginning of the 1980s, however despite the lack of IS research investigating power in organisations, the importance of investigating IS from a power and political lens has often been emphasised by a number of scholars (Bloomfield & Coombs, 1992; Jasperson, Carte Butler, Croes & Zheng 2002; Keen 1981,

Markus 1983; Walsham, 1993). In these studies, it is argued that information systems development and adoption is both a technical and political process as it increasingly alters relationships, forms of communication, influence, authority, and control (Keen 1981).

The most common purpose for which IS researchers study power is to explain the relations between people, technology, and structure within organisations (Orlikowski & Robey 1991; Walsham 1993). These studies are pre-disposed to interpretation of the relationship between power and information systems from a perspective that considers information systems as a social product of subjective human actions borne out of specific structural and cultural contexts and its simultaneous ability to have it in embedded sets of roles and resources which can facilitate of constrain human beings and thus create, recreate and transform the very same contexts (Orlikowski & Robey 1991, p. 151).

There is an emergent view of power as pervasive in all organisational action and discourse, thus exercise of power is an on-going process that has indefinable features that are interlinked and are complex (Walsham 1993). Power is studied from this perspective with the purpose of interpreting various ways in which power plays out formal and informal structures within the organisation by various stakeholders with different intentions and how these stakeholders provide meaning to these various intentions and their outcomes (e.g. Lin & Silva 2005).

2.3.4. Perspectives of Studying Power in Information Systems Research

There are multiple paradigms that are used to understand the relationships between information systems and power in organisations and how power is studied in information systems research (Jasperson et al. 2002). A useful framework that can be used to establish this is one suggested by Markus and Robey (1988); it is regarded as one of the better lenses that help to understand researchers' views regarding causal structure between information systems and organisational power (Attygalle, von Hellens, & Potter 2010; Jasperson et al. 2002; Orlikowski & Robey 1991).

Markus & Robey (1988) use the concept of causal agency to establish whether IS can cause change, whether change is introduced by actors in order to purposefully accomplish intended objectives or whether change emerges unpredictably with the interaction of people with the organisational environment (Jasperson et al. 2002). Causal agency is the "analyst's beliefs about the identity of the causal agent, the nature of causal action and the direction of causal

influence among the elements in a theory" (Markus & Robey 1988, p. 545). Markus and Robey (1988) suggest three causal perspectives: Technological imperative, organisational imperative and emergent perspectives.

The technological perspective views information systems as an outside force that determines the behaviour of individuals and organisations. In this perspective, information systems are considered to be strong drivers of organisational outcomes (Jasperson et al. 2002; Markus & Robey 1991). Studies based on the technological perspective place technology in the role of an external agent capable of directly transforming organisations, empirical research that adopts this perspective tends to focus on the relationship between IT and formal structures of organisation (Orlikowski 1991). These studies theorize and empirically examine ways that the introduction and use of IT alters the exercise and distribution of power in organisations (Jasperson et al. 2002).

The organisational perspective adopts a position that is in contrast with that of the technological perspective in that in this perspective, information systems change is attributed to organisational influences. The organisational imperative emphasizes the role of power and political action in designing, developing, and implementing information systems (Markus & Robey 1988). In this perspective, information systems are the outcomes of power struggles that occur in their design and implementation. Studies employing this perspective suggest IS adoption, implementation, and institutionalisation as politically-charged processes with outcomes that tend to benefit those in power or those with larger bases of power (Jasperson et al. 2002).

The emergent perspective argues that the relationship between information systems and the organisational setting is reflexive, in other words, the implementation and adoption of information systems is impacted by the fabric of the organisational setting, once implemented information systems may initiate a series of reciprocal causes and effects from which the use of information systems and organisational outcomes may arise (Markus & Robey 1988). Resistance to information system change is largely studied under the emergent perspective and the notion of resistance under this perspective is that it is caused primarily by the interaction between organisational actors and information system change (Markus 1983).

Earlier studies that investigated information systems in organisations were mainly based on the first two perspectives, i.e. the technological and organisational imperatives. Increasingly, researchers realized the need for a perspective that takes into account both the technological and organisational perspective; accordingly, the emergent perspective has been most popular with researchers and has been widely used to study the power in information systems research. For example studies that focus the subject of power with regards to how individuals and organisations adopt of resist information systems change, the role of power in the design, implementation and institutionalisation of information systems largely fall under the emergent perspective (Avelino & Rotmans 2009); Lapointe and Rivard 2005; Orlikiwski 2000).

2.3.5. Theories used to Study Power in Information Systems Research

The earliest studies (e.g. Bariff & Galbraith 1978; Bjorn-Andersen & Pedersen 1980; Keen 1981) that dealt on the study of power were based on the positivist research paradigm, and were mainly influenced by Dahl's (1957) conception of power of agencies making other agencies do something that they would otherwise not do (i.e. 'power over'). The following subsections give an overview of the theories that this researcher believes have been most prominent in the study of power in the interpretive paradigm; these are critical social theory, structuration theory and the Foucauldian notion of power. Other approaches such as phenomenology and hermeneutics and soft systems methodology are omitted as they have not been prominent in the study of power in IS and there have been very few empirical pieces based on them and also because those that exist do not have a central theme of power in their locus.

Critical Theory

Critical theory (also referred to as 'Critical Social Theory or 'Critical Research') is a school of thought in social sciences research whose main objective is the betterment of the human condition by uncovering and reviewing the restraining and alienating conditions prevalent in society through analysing opposing views, conflict and contradiction in a manner that seeks to eliminate these causes of alienation and domination (Bhattacherjee 2012; Ngwenyama 1991). Information systems researchers apply critical theory in diverse contexts to investigate economic and sociological conditions that shape the development and adoption of IS and explain detrimental consequences such as increased control, domination and oppression of individuals and groups (Brooke 2002).

Critical theorists hold that since technological artefacts are artefacts of power struggles, in other words, they are carriers of specific social interests. Thus by revealing what interests are embedded in information systems and in organizing processes, critical theory can help in understanding of positions and experiences of people affected by the systems and linking these understandings with broader conditions, power relations and social structures (Brooke 2002; Kvansny & Ridchardson 2006; McGarth 2005). An example of an empirical study that applies critical theory is an ethnographic study by Myers and Young (1997) that applies critical theory to reveal hidden agencies, power and managerial assumptions that are embedded in information systems development projects.

Critical theory is mainly criticized for lacking a social theory on emancipation and an inadequate conceptualisation of power, particularly the necessities, restrictions, controls and interests related to power (Silva 2007). Some have referred to it as a meta-theory that lacks praxis orientation. It is for this reason many believe that there are not many empirical pieces on critical theory, i.e. due to its lack of lack practicality (McGarth 2005). To address these limitations, IS researchers have proposed complementing Critical Theory with other theoretical approaches to power such as the works by Foucault (Brooke, 2002) and Actor-Network Theory (Doolin & Lowe, 2002).

Structuration Theory

Structuration theory or the theory of structuration was proposed by British sociologist Anthony Giddens (1984). The principal aim of the theory is to resolve the debate between those theories which place their emphasis at the level of human agents and human action, and alternative theories which focus on the structure of social systems. According to Giddens (1984) structure is conceptualised as the roles and resources that are used by actors in their interaction. These rules can be created, changed or transformed over time. Through structuration theory, agency/structure debate is resolved by Giddens (1984) into a duality of structure whereby agents and structure are not two independently given sets of phenomena, but represent a duality whereby structure is drawn on in human interactions but, in so doing social structures are produced and reproduced (Jones & Karsten 2008; Walsham 1995). Structuration is a general theory of social sciences rather than a theory that is specific to IS, however it is said to be have been one of the most influential theoretical perspective in IS

research and a popular theoretical lens of choice for scholars researching the relationship between information systems and organisations.

Some researchers have adopted the theory of structuration as it is, while others have adapted it for IS research. An example of a study that has adopted structuration concepts directly are is one by Lyytinen and Ngwenyama (1992), the study adopts the concept of the duality of structure to develop a formal model for computer supported cooperative work. Specifically with regards to the concept of power, Giddens (1984) locates power in his theory as the capacity to achieve outcomes, however, whether or not these are connected to sectional interests is not well defined in this conceptualisation (Gidden's 1984, pg. 257). Another example of a study that focuses on power is by that Orlikowski (1992), the study examines the relationship between power and information systems by examining how the introduction of information technology can exert managerial control over users and restrain their discretion.

Despite its popularity, the theory of structuration has also been widely criticised by several scholars. For example, Clegg (1989) criticises the theory of structuration for not taking into account the preconditions of domination as it neglects in its conceptualisation that standing structures are a result of existent power relations. Structuration theory has also been criticised for being a 'meta-theory' as it does not make explicit the nature of research questions it aims to address (Silva, 1997).Walsham (1993, p. 70) also acknowledges this limitation of structuration and states is that he duality of structure and the associated modalities are too detailed and complex for empirical analysis in some instances. The utility of the structuration theory thus seems to be compromised by these limitations, any researcher who intends to use structuration theory will face a challenge of linking theory and empirical data (Silva, 1997; Pozzebon & Pinsonneault 2001).

Foucault

Michael Foucault's concept of disciplinary power through his classical work, *Discipline and Punish* (1975) has had a major influence on the study of power in organisations across various disciplines. Disciplinary power is operated, exercised and reproduced by surveillance, observation and comparative measures (Clegg 1989). In organisations, various technologies are deployed for evaluation and calculation to make visible the extent to which human behaviour deviates from prescribed norms. Contemporary examples include the collection of

performance information, forms of surveillance such as supervision, routinization and formalisation. These actions are in order to increase control and monitor the behaviour of individuals in organisations (Clegg et al. 2006).

Foucault's conception of disciplinary of power has received some attention in the information systems (see Bloomfield & Coombs 1992; Willcocks 2006). Doolin (1998) adopts a Foucauldian perspective to examine the power effects involved in the deployment of an information system in a hospital context, the study scrutinizes clinical procedures and links patient treatment decisions to costs, thus making clinical activity susceptible to management intervention on issues such as patient admissions, length of stay and discharge. A similar example is that by Sia, Tang, Soh and Boh (2002) that also draws on the Foucauldian notion of disciplinary power to study management control in organisations and how different forces play out in the context of ERP implementation and explore the implications for power distribution in organisations.

The contribution of Foucault (1975) to the discourse of power in organisations is not limited to disciplinary power. Foucault (1975) has also theorized about the relationship between power and knowledge, which led to the development of the concept of 'power/knowledge' to signify that power is constituted through accepted forms of knowledge and scientific comprehension (Willcocks 2006). Foucault's work on power is it vast and beyond the scope of this research report to attempt to define in a consolidated manner, however a common theme in Foucault's work on power it that power is exercised from and within the social body, power is exercised through ubiquitous varied instruments, techniques and procedures (Ye, Marshall & McKay 2012).

2.4. The Circuits of Power Framework

As highlighted in the previous section, the many ways in which power is conceptualised by scholars and the various theoretical standpoints that have been advanced present a challenge for information systems researchers who intend to study power in organisations. What also presents a further challenge is that predominant conceptions of power in organisational analysis do not adequately account for various forms of power and the complex ways in which manifests in organisations, how information systems are structured by these power relations and how information systems in turn structure power relations, experiences, meanings and norms in organisations (Silva 2007). These challenges motivate for a

theoretical approach that aims to encompass various forms of power in the context of power and organisations in order to adequately account for the phenomenon and an epistemological position that emphasises the interpretation of meanings, intentions and actions. Clegg's (1989) 'circuits of power' framework attempts to advance such a theoretical framework that encourages this requisite epistemological position.

2.4.1. Overview of the Circuits of Power Framework

The circuits of power framework is an inter-disciplinary theoretical framework that constitutes concepts derived from the sociology of sciences and the sociology of organisations and relates them to organisations. The idea behind Clegg's (1989) metaphor of presenting power as circuits is to represent how power may flow through different modalities. Causal power (or 'power over') focuses on actions which agencies (one individual or a group (*A*s)) use to make other agencies (either a group or an individual, (*B*s)) do things they would not do otherwise.

Dispositional power is the capability that individuals have to produce outcomes as the result of their associations as well as by drawing on discursive resources, i.e. the ability to switch on 'power over' or 'power to'. Facilitative power (or 'power to') focuses on a productive view of power that sees organisations and collective actions as the result of power. These are each accounted for in the following three circuits: (1) the episodic circuit *(causal)*, (2) the social integration circuit *(facilitative)*, and (3) the system integration circuit *(dispositional)*. The social and system integration circuits can be influenced by external environmental contingencies as well as being open to internal changes in the dynamics of power relations. The three circuits are linked by obligatory passage points (OPPs).

Agency and Organisation

The relationship between agency and organisation is central in Clegg's circuits of power framework. Agency is defined as "something which is achieved by virtue of organisation, whether of a human being's dispositional capacities or of a collective nature, in the sense usually reserved for the referent of 'organisations'" (Clegg 1989, p 17). Though somewhat confusing, Clegg's definition of agency in organisations avoids reductionism so that agencies are not perceived only as human or specific conceptions of structure, instead it is a level of analysis that is a result of some sort of organisation (whether formal or otherwise) that is capable of making decisions and seek control by their actions or virtue of their authority or

interests (Clegg 1989). Agencies may refer to individuals, teams, groups or departments that are organised to purposefully achieve goals. Clegg (1989) advocates for an understanding of different forms of agencies in organisations, and how they make sense of the rules that they actively constrict and deconstruct in the context of their actions as a basis of understanding organisational power (Clegg 2007).

Obligatory Passage Points

The three circuits of power are linked to by what is referred to as obligatory passage points. The concept of obligatory passage point is borrowed from Actor Network Theory (ANT) and theory of translation (Callon 1984). According to Silva & Backhouse (1997), an obligatory passage point is "an actor network linked by discourses presenting the solution of a problem in terms of resources owned by the agent that proposes the OPP". In other words, an obligatory passage point is a conduit through which power must pass. In information systems research, the concept of an obligatory passage point is largely associated with the institutionalisation of new innovations (Silva & Backhouse 2007; Smith, Winchester, Bunker & Jamieson 2010). For example, the institutionalisation an ERP system can be thought of as an obligatory passage point when employees of a company are forced to use it in order to perform their daily tasks (Silva & Fulk 2012).

Exogenous Environmental Contingencies

Episodic power outcomes introduce change in the circuits of social and system integration, however Clegg's (1989) framework also takes into account that the external environmental factors may also introduce change that may fix or refix social integration or changes in system integration by triggering changes in techniques of production and discipline. This is what is referred to as exogenous contingencies. The extent to which exogenous contingencies (or external factors) can affect the circuits of social integration and system integration are dependent on the relationship between the context under which the framework is used and external environmental influences (Clegg 1989, 2006).

2.4.2. The Three Circuits of Power

The main idea of the Clegg's (1989) framework is to represent how through the three circuits of power represent how power flows through different modalities. Each of these circuits is discussed in detail in this subsection. Figure 1 below is a diagrammatic account of the circuits of power framework.

Episodic circuit

The episodic circuit of power, what Clegg refers to as the 'normal power' of social sciences is the most tangible of the three circuits as it is recognisable by its outcomes, i.e. actions. The conception of power in this circuit is consistent with Foucault's (1975) emphasis that the outcome of any power will be tangible actions. The character of this circuit can be recognized in Law's (1991) previously cited definition of power: an 'A' exercises power over a 'B' when 'A' makes 'B' to do something 'B' would not otherwise do (A and B constitute different agencies). Thus power conceived episodically involves at least two agencies and takes place within a reasonably well demarcated framework in which there are social relations between agencies. Agencies represent certain interests, and these interests are behind the social actions that define these interests (Clegg et al. 2006).

In the episodic circuit, power is manifested by agents being capable of controlling resources and establishing alliances to procure their intended outcomes. It is in this circuit where agents struggle to control resources. It is episodic circuit that power struggles manifest, either in terms of formal positions of authority or through informal measures, namely politics (Silva 2007). The act of agencies to achieve their desired outcomes is represented by arrows pointing to the right in the above figure, while arrows in the opposite direction denote resistance.

Through episodic circuit also Clegg (1989) acknowledges that power and resistance as two separate through symbiotic features of social life. It is also within the episodic circuit that the concept of 'politics' or 'political activity' manifests, as politics is the exercise of power, despite the fact that this exercise occurs outcome of the legitimate parameters of organisation (Mintzberg 1985). The episodic circuit also accounts for why some agents may hold more power than others, i.e. the reification of power or 'power storage' and the inequality of agencies (i.e. why some may be more effective than others) in what Clegg (1989) calls social relations.

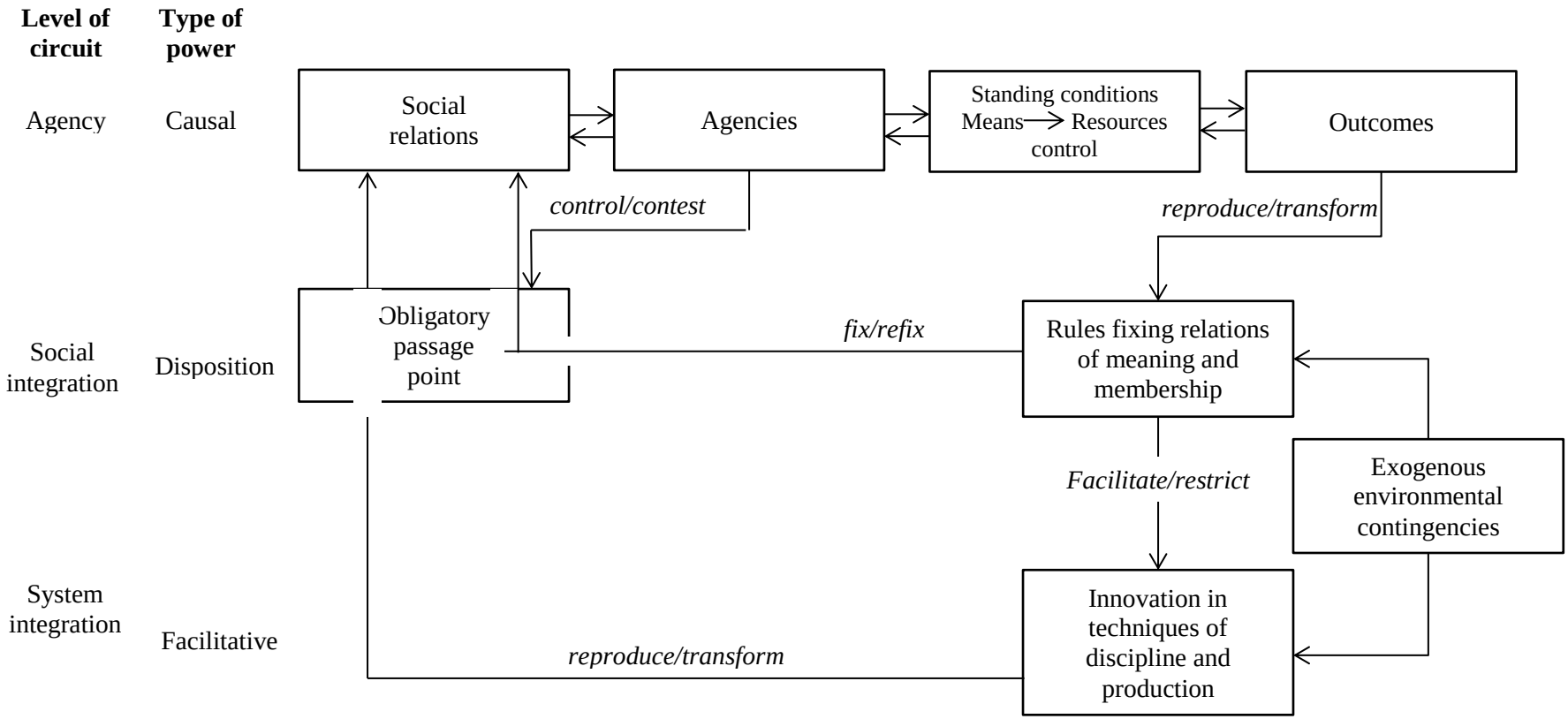

Figure 1: Circuits of Power Framework (Clegg 2006, p.243)

Social relations constitute the identity of agencies who are the collective loci of decision-making and action and are best understood by identifying the prevailing formal and information structures of authority that pre-configure power relations in terms of how access to control resources is distributed unequally in organisations. Relations in organisations, whether formal or informal are fixed in obligatory passage points, in other words episodic power presupposes social relations fixed in obligatory passage points.

As previously mentioned, the arrows pointing to the right in the episodic circuit indicate social relations constituting agencies, agencies utilizing their resources in order to consolidate their power and achieve their outcomes. Those agents who successfully control resources will be those with a stronger power base. This is what the standing conditions represent in the figure. The marshalling of resources is dependent on the ability of agents to interpret their standing conditions to effectively use the means available to them. In studying standing conditions of episodic power, one first has to identify those agencies struggling to exercise 'power over', their scope of action and the means available to activate their resources and achieve their desired outcomes. Standing conditions may restrict or facilitate causal powers; hence the tendencies of any given phenomenon within specific relations to exert its implicit causal powers will be contingent upon the standing conditions prevailing (Clegg 2006).

The episodic circuit accounts for the fact that power achieves outcomes. This is represented by the outcomes box in Figure 1. Outcomes reflect the objectives and intentions of agents. When achieved, these outcomes have an impact on the circuits of social integration and system integration as they can reproduce or transform existing power structures and in turn introduce or create new meanings in organisations (Clegg et al. 2006). In turn the base of episodic power in preconfigured in the circuits of social and system integration. It is precisely because of this reason that Clegg (1989) warns not to consider power only in its episodic nature but adopt a more reflexive perspective of how the exercise of power alters the dynamics of social structures. Next, the circuits of social and system integration are discussed respectively.

Circuit of Social Integration

The circuit of social integration deals with dispositional or symbolic power, i.e. 'power storage'. The main concepts in this circuit are rules of meaning and membership, and how these impact social relations and alliances. The circuit of social integration is particularly

concerned with how power is embedded in shared norms which bind the cultural characteristics of an institution (Silva 1997). Schein (1996) suggests that cultural characteristic can be analysed in terms of observable but hard to define organisational attributes that one encounters when they encounter an unfamiliar culture, ideals, norms, standards and principles and phenomena that remain unexplained when insiders are asked about the values of the organisational culture.

Through the circuit of social integration, episodic outcomes serve to either more or less transform or reproduce the rules fixing extant relations of meaning and membership in organisational fields; as these are reproduced or transformed they fix or refix those obligatory passage points – the channels, conduits, and circuitry of extant power relations. Exogenous external contingencies may also effect changes in this circuit as discussed earlier. The analysis of this circuit should identify the legitimate (formal rules) and illegitimate (informal rules) dimensions of power within the organisation. The recognition of the illegitimate dimension of power, or its dark side, is fundamental in performing a complete political appraisal of the organisation (Silva & Backhouse 1997). Concepts related to power and resistance that have been developed in the power literature include norms and culture (Smith et al. 2010). Lastly, the analysis of this circuit should also identify norms and cultural relations that may be related to resistance in the exercise of power.

Circuit of System Integration

Power in the circuit of system integration is understood in terms of its ability to produce and achieve collective goals, i.e. 'power to' or facilitative power. Facilitative power is broadens the understanding of power beyond conflict, thus facilitative power is concerned with the capacities that preconfigure the standing conditions necessary for episodic power to occur. The main elements of this circuit are referred to by Clegg (1989) as techniques of discipline and production. Techniques of discipline seek to constrain and channel action prohibitively while techniques of production seek to drive action through normative desires. Changes in techniques of production and discipline involve may empower or disempower agencies as in their as they seek to accomplish their productive tasks. Power represented by this circuit is considered facilitative as conditions of production and discipline might empower or disempower agencies in their productive activities.

The circuit of system integration is the major source of disruption in the circuits of power framework, especially when the conditions of production and discipline are changed as this can lead to the creation of new agencies, new practices or methods of production and techniques of discipline (Silva 2007). The system integration circuit is pivotal in information systems research as the introduction of new information systems or information systems change can potentially lead to the creation of new roles and structures, which is why their institutionalisation is incumbent on the managerial ability to translate the new rules and practices into discourse that can be accepted by other members in the organisation. In information systems research, the circuit of system integration is important for understanding power relationships because it helps analyse both how information systems affect power and how information systems are shaped by power. The analysis of this circuit involve how information systems are used as a means of production, control and discipline and how changes in means of production, control and discipline may alter the facilitative power of actors.

2.4.3. The Application of the Circuits Framework in Information Systems Research

Clegg's circuits of power framework has been used to investigate power in organisations in various contexts by IS researchers. The framework has been used in IS research to study the institutionalisation of information systems (Silva & Backhouse 1997) and the creation and adoption of information systems security standards (Backhouse, Hsu and Silva, 2006; Fragos, Karyda and Kiountouzis, 2007; Smith et al. 2010). A survey of the literature reveals that the Clegg's (1989) framework has not been used in a post-merger IS integration context, however, the concepts or ideas related to power and politics in a post-merger context suggest that the framework could be an appropriate lens to study the phenomenon of power and politics.

The manifestation of causal power in the post-merger IS integration context is expected as the integration process itself may be highly politically charged due to various stakeholders competing for scarce resources and because these stakeholders may also have conflicting interests in the outcomes of the merger process (Mehta & Hirschheim, 2004). Clegg's (1981) episodic circuit is a useful lens of inquiry as its analysis involves the identification of agencies, the study of their day to day social relations, how agencies use resources at their disposal to achieve their desired outcomes and resistance to the actual exercise of power.

Post-merger IS integration is also likely to have an impact on social integration, as the merging partners may have different organisational cultures, and the merging of both cultures into a singular may or may not alter the dispositional power of actors and groups (Cartwright & Cooper 1990; Mehta & Hirschheim, 2004). Another prospect that the post-merger context presents is alterations to existing techniques of production and discipline that were inherent in the IS functions of the two merging partners before they merged. Changes in techniques of production may alter the capacity of actors to do their daily tasks while changes in techniques of discipline may lead to increased control over operations.

The reasons presented above are suggest that Clegg's (1989) framework could be an appropriate theoretical base for a study on power and politics in a post-merger IS integration context. The major strength of the circuits framework is that it takes into account the different forms of power and integrates existing theories of power from sociology and relates them to organisations in order to comprehensively accounts for different forms of power (i.e. causal, facilitative and dispositional) (Silva 2007).

2.5.Summary and Conclusion

This chapter began by providing a background on the concepts of mergers and acquisitions and post-merger information systems integration, and the rationale for why post-merger, the merging partners would integrate their systems. A survey of the literature on post-merger IS integration revealed that even though the role of power and politics is often acknowledged in post-merger IS integration research, there are very few studies which have specifically studied power dynamics in the post-merger IS integration context. This constitutes a research gap given that the contextual conditions of mergers and acquisitions create conditions for power to be exercised and political activity to occur (McKiernan & Merali 1995; Robbins & Stylianou 1999).

The review of the literature then further outlined Law's (1991) typology of power that offers four general categories of power conceptualisations ('power to', 'power over', 'power storage' and' power discretion') along with a of Mintzberg's (1985) conceptualisation of politics in the organisational setting, which this study adopts. This chapter then went on to provide a discussion of power and politics in information systems research, perspectives that researchers adopt when they study power as well as an overview of some of the theories that IS researches adopt when studying power. The literature review also revealed that the many

conceptualisations of power, how it is studied in IS research and the variety of theories used presents a theoretical challenge for a researcher in terms of which theory to adopt, thus a theoretical framework that takes into account different conceptualisations of power and relates them together is necessary. Clegg's (1989) circuits of power framework is an appropriate for such a purpose and is one that was considered appropriate for this research.

To summarise and conclude, the literature review demonstrated that there is a compelling reason to study power and politics in the post-merger context. Such studies should take into account contextual factors such as the type of merger, the form of integration that is required and the IS integration objectives desired as well as the IS integration approach. These contextual factors are relevant as their permutations may provide the merging parties with power bases to negotiate and steer the integration (Mehta and Hirschheim 2004). Due to the complex nature of power and politics in organisations, an epistemological paradigm based on the emergent perspective on the relationship between information systems and organisation would be the most appropriate as it takes meanings and intentions into account in its interpretation (Silva 2007).

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter describes the overarching philosophical paradigm under which this study is conducted; the research strategy, as well as the techniques that were used to carry out the study. The reasons as to why the research strategy and these techniques were chosen against other available alternatives are discussed along with some of their limitations as well as measures that were taken in order to mitigate these limitations. The rest of the chapter is structured as follows:

- Section *3.1* discusses the philosophical paradigm under which research is conducted as well as motivation why it was considered suitable for this study.
- *Section 3.2* the outlines the research strategy that was chosen (i.e. case research) along with justification as to why it was considered to be most appropriate over alternative research strategies.
- *Section 3.3* presents an initial conceptual framework that was used to guide data collection and analysis.
- *Section 3.4* outlines the data collection techniques that were used.
- *Section 3.5* describes how Miles and Huberman's (1994) iterative process for qualitative data analysis was applied to analyse data that was collected.
- *Section 3.6* discusses how this research was evaluated by applying Klein and Myers' (1999) set of principles for evaluating interpretive research.
- *Section 3.7* outlines the research ethical research issues that were taken into consideration during the research process.
- *Section 3.8* concludes.

3.1. Research Philosophy

There are three dominant philosophical paradigms in information systems research, these are interpretivism, positivism and to a lesser extent critical research (Myers & Avison 1997 Orlikowski & Baroudi 1991). These two most dominant approaches (i.e. interpretivism and positivism) are distinguished mainly by their epistemological and ontological positions. The epistemological position of positivism is that knowledge should be based on scientifically observable facts and that the way that it is acquired should be value free, while in the epistemological position advanced by interpretivism is it that knowledge is constructed subjectively and that facts and values are intertwined (Walsham 1995).

In the positivistic paradigm reality exists independently and scientific knowledge and how it is constructed is based on objective facts while the ontological premise of the interpretive paradigm is that reality is socially constructed, and that what people consider as reality and truth is based on the subjective meaning that they attach to how they interact with the world around them (Bhatterjee 2012; Walsham 1995). The premise of positivistic research is that there exist a priori fixed relationships within phenomena under study, structured instruments are typically used in positivist research and the studies primarily serve to test theory in an attempt to increase a predictive understanding of phenomena (Orlikowski & Baroudi 1991; Walsham 1995).

In positivistic research paradigm, the research strategies (usually experiments and surveys) and sampling processes used are usually those that are intended to ensure that the results of the findings can be inferred to a wider population, i.e. generalised (Bhatterjee 2012). In the interpretive paradigm, the research strategies that are employed are those that are designed in order to get richness and depth. Research strategies that are usually employed in the interpretive paradigm are interviews, case studies, action research and ethnography. In contrast to positivist research where generalizability of results is sought and large samples are the norm, interpretive research usually relies on smaller samples for richness and depth; however, the findings of interpretive studies are usually not widely generalizable to larger populations and are not intended to be (ibid).

The philosophical lens that is adopted for this study is interpretivism. The interpretivist lens is appropriate for the following reasons. Firstly, the intricacies of the concepts of power and politics are not separate causes that can be linked to effect, but are an intertwined complex processes best studied by assigning meanings and interpretations in contextual settings in order to adequately make sense of them (Silva 2007). The interpretive perspective is most suitable for studying complex social phenomena with the objective of increasing our understanding of the phenomena in its contextual settings (Walsham 1995). Secondly, and consistent with the objectives of the proposed study, interpretive research lends itself to studying the phenomena of interest from the participants' perspective by attempting to understand human behaviour from the point of view of human actors and their intentions (Darke, Shanks, & Broadbent, 1998; Walsham 1995). Thirdly, as previously highlighted, the study of how power and politics play a role in the integration of IS functions of two merging

entities is an emergent field, interpretive research is most appropriate where the researchers do not have a priori understanding of the situation (Walsham 1995; 2006).

The alternative epistemological paradigm, i.e. positivism, would not have been as appropriate for this study as there are no a priori fixed relationships within the phenomena which this study intends to investigate. Another reason is that since the purpose of the study is to understand a phenomenon, generalisation from the setting to a wider population is not sought; rather the intention is to understand the deeper structure of a phenomenon, which it is believed can then be used to inform other settings. Instead of attempting to generalise from theory to description by starting with facts or the rich description of a case, the researcher aims to generalise to specific implications and to rich insight (Lee & Baskerville, p. 238, 2003).

3.2. Research Strategy

In information systems research, the common research strategies available to conduct interpretive researchers are ethnography, action research, the case study method and hermeneutics (Myers 1997; Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991). The chosen strategy for this research is the case study method. In this section, the case study method is described in more detail, followed by the justification for why it was chosen as well as the justification for choice of the site where the study was conducted.

3.2.1. Case Study Research

The case research strategy is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, and is most appropriate when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin 1994, p. 13). Case study research is usually conducted in the interpretive tradition and relies mainly on the collection of qualitative data; however the case study research strategy can also be used as a method of inquiry in the positivistic paradigm. Case research is a comprehensive research strategy in its own right, covering its own logic of design, data collection and explicit methods of data analysis (Yin 1994).

The theoretical objective for conducting a case study may be: exploratory, descriptive or explanatory. Exploratory designs are usually conducted in research areas where there are few earlier studies to which references can be made about the phenomenon. The objective of

exploratory studies are to insights and familiarity about the subject of interest, scope out magnitude of extent and possibly define and/or refine research questions and hypotheses (Yin 1994). Explanatory studies seek explanations of observed phenomena, problems, or behaviours by linking an event with its effects and are suitable for investigating and possible causality (Bhattacherjee 2012). Descriptive case studies are often used to illustrate events and their specific context (Bhattacherjee 2012). The purpose for which the case study strategy is employed in this research is explanatory as the study seeks to gain insights on the power issues prevalent in post-merger IS integration and explain how the process of post-merger integration of IS if influenced by power and politics and also to explain how power dynamics that were inherent in the merging entities are changed or transformed by the integration of IS functions.

Case study research design may involve a single case or multiple cases. The single case design is most appropriate when the objective is to study the phenomenon under study in depth in order in a manner that provides a rich description and understanding, while the multiple-case design strategy is suitable in areas where cross-case analysis and comparison is sought in order to account for the phenomena of interest in diverse settings (Darke et al. 1998). The rationale for a considering a single case can either be (i) when the case represents a critical case in testing a theory, (ii) when the case is unique, (iii) when the case is typical (or representative), (iv) when the case is revelatory or when the study is longitudinal (Yin 2013, p. 47-50). The main reason for using a single-case approach for this study is that the case is revelatory as opportunity presented itself for the researcher to investigate a phenomenon that is not always easily accessible. For this study, the single case study approach was also considered to be appropriate as the objective of the study was to gain an in-depth understanding power and politics in the post-merger IS integration context. For this study comparison across cases in a various settings was not sought.

As with other research strategies in the interpretive paradigm, existing theory can be used in the case study approach. There are three district uses of theory in the interpretive paradigm: as an initial guide to design and data collection; as part of an iterative process of data collection and analysis, and as a final product of research (Eisenhardt 1989; Miles & Huberman 1994) For this study, an initial conceptual framework based on Clegg's (1989) circuits of power was used to guide the data collection and data analysis stages of the research process. Clegg's (1989) framework takes into account previous knowledge on the

subjects of power and politics in information systems and thus is a coherent theoretical base to inform the aspects of the research problem under study (Walsham 1995).

The use of existing theory in IS research to study power and politics is valuable as there are many different interpretations of what power and politics are and how they are related to information systems, therefore a theoretical framework is of value as it defines the scope and which constructs the researcher must focus on. Walshman (1995) advises that research conducted in the interpretive paradigm is aimed at building theory, so the researcher must be open to discovering new meanings in data; accordingly the research process for this study was conducted in a manner that is open to the discovery of new meanings in data that may not necessarily have been accounted for in the initial conceptual framework.

3.2.2. Justification for Case Research Strategy

The decision whether to use the case approach is not always obvious. It has been proposed by some scholars (Benbasat, Golstein, Mead 1987; Yin 1994) that the researcher must ask the following questions when deciding on the appropriateness case research for the purpose of their study.

- Is the nature of research question a "how" or a "why"?
- Can the phenomenon of interest be studied outside of its natural setting?
- Does the phenomenon of interest have a well-established theoretical base?
- Is it necessary to control or manipulate the subject of interest in order to address research objectives?
- Does the study focus on contemporary events?

The following are the primary reasons why the case study strategy was employed in this research:

- *Nature of Research Question* – Case studies are suitable for studying complex social phenomena particularly to answer research questions like "how" or "why (Yin 1994). The objective of this study was to investigate *how* the integration of IS functions of two merging entities is influenced by power and politics and *how* existing power dynamics are changed by the integration. Thus, the case study design was found suitable as it allows rich empirical description of a phenomenon (Eisenhart & Graeber 2007).

- *Phenomenon and context* – The case study strategy is appropriate when the researcher intends to study a phenomenon holistically (Yin 1994). In order to address the research questions investigated in this study, it was important to study the phenomenon in its natural context as case specific conditions had to be taken into account. More so, as some of the variables in this study were not known in advance given that the phenomenon that is under study is emergent and complex, the case study method was chosen as it allows for the study of phenomenon when some research variables may not be known beforehand (Cavaye 1996, Eisenhart & Graeber 2007).
- *Theoretical Base* – For this study the case study design was appropriate as it can in be used in a manner that it incorporates an existing theoretical framework of a phenomenon of interest. This study adopts a preliminary conceptual framework based on Clegg's (1989) circuits of power framework in order to define the boundaries of what is being studied.
- *Control or Manipulation/Role of the researcher* – Case study research is appropriate in situations where there researcher has no control over the process under investigation, or where the researcher is merely an outsider in this study with no direct personal stake in the outcome of the process/phenomenon. This is favourable in the study of phenomena such as power and politics as Silva (1997) argues that one of the epistemological challenges of the study of power and politics is that politics is considered the 'dark' side of power, thus it would probably be difficult to respondents to be frank in expressing their views if the researcher was also a stakeholder in the phenomenon under study (Walsham 1995). Walsham (ibid) does add that the downside of this approach is that the researcher may be debarred from access to information that is considered too confidential or too sensitive to be shared with outsiders.
- *Degree of focus on contemporary events* – The phenomenon under study is contemporary, i.e. the study was conducted just after the merging companies had completed IS integration and some aspects of the IS integration are still in progress. This is consistent with the view that case research should focus on contemporary events.

Even though case studies have been used successfully by information systems researchers for purposes of building or testing theory, there are criticisms that are typically levelled at case research. The most common criticism about case research that is popular with researchers of large sample surveys is that the case study method has no basis for scientific generalisation as they are typically limited to one particular context, e.g. an organisation as is the case in this study (Woodside 2010, Yin 1994). The objective of this study is not to generalise findings to a population using statistical techniques but to generalise findings to theoretical propositions by making explicit mental models related to the processes and phenomena being studied (Lee and Baskerville 2003). The form of generalization that is sought in this case involves specific implications in a specific domain of action (Walsham 1995).

Another common criticism about case study research is that case study research may take too long and result unreadable final research output (Yin 1994). The researcher's choices can alleviate such a situation, e.g. by setting boundaries of the case. In the case of this study, Clegg's (1989) framework was used as a preliminary theoretical basis for which to build a conceptual model bounding the case. The model was useful in terms of organizing and limiting concepts that the researcher developed during data collection and limiting what data to attend to or collect. Further, this study covers only the time period from which the integration of IS was introduced to when the integration was finally implemented and subsequently institutionalised.

The last common criticism about case studies relates to the fact that they may lead to idiosyncratic and biased findings; this potential limitation however is usually common with case research that are conducted without measures put in place to ensure rigor (Darke et al. 1998). In this study, this was alleviated through the triangulation of data, i.e. by collecting a rich set of data pertaining to the phenomenon as well as capturing the contextual complexity of the phenomenon by obtaining data from different sources with the goal of establishing a credible chain of evidence.

The researcher is aware that there are other alternative research methods in the interpretive paradigm such as action research and ethnography, however these were deemed unfavourable. Ethnographic research was unsuitable for this study as it requires a close involvement with the research setting, and that the researcher runs the risk of being socialised to the opinions of the subjects and may lose the benefit of having an outsider's view of the

phenomenon under investigation (Walsham 1995). Another downside of ethnography is that it time-consuming as ethnographic research is usually conducted over longer periods; this would not fit with the timeframe that was given for this study to be completed. Action research was also not suitable as the researcher was not an active participant in the research setting and the researcher would not have been able to influence the unfolding of events at the case site. Thus after weighing the opportunity costs the case study method augurs more favourable as a research strategy for this study.

3.2.3. Site Selection

Case site selection is an important aspect of developing theory from case research. For this study, the decision on the site was pragmatic rather than based on random selection. According to Eisenhardt (1989), even though cases may be chosen randomly, random selection is neither necessary nor preferable, however, site selection should be carefully thought out rather than opportunistic. For this study, the decision on the case was based mainly on feasibility (i.e. the organisation's willingness to participate in the study by providing resources such as availing staff members for interviews) as mergers are not frequent and access to a contemporary site is difficult. The researcher is aware that should it have been impossible to conduct an in-depth study at a single site, it would be required to look at other sites to increase the understanding of the phenomenon.

The case site is a division of a firm that was a result of a merger of two South African insurance firms, AlphaInsure and BetaInsure. These two firms merged in 2010 to form AlphaBeta Insurance Holdings. The merger was 'horizontal', i.e. that of two competitors at the same stage in the product life cycle. The two merging firms operated mainly in two different markets. AlphaInsure operated mainly in the middle to higher income side of the market, while BetaInsure operated in the lower end of the market. There was some overlap in terms of the products both AlphaInsure and BetaInsure sold, for example AlphaInsure had some products for the lower end of the market while BetaInsure also had a few products designed for the higher market. The main objective of the merger was the that it would lead to consolidate different divisions of both forms into an insurance group what would be able to compete in all segments of the market, i.e. target and sell products to lower, middle and high income groups.

After the merger, both entities continued to operate almost autonomously. However there have been increased efforts to integrate some business operations and processes where it is feasible and where the benefits are likely to be realized with minimum disruption to operations. For both the merging firms, information systems played a crucial role before the merger, and still continue to play both supporting and strategic roles. Naturally, there have been great overlaps and duplication of capacities in both firms. The division that forms part of the case site is one that was identified in the early stages of the merger process as one that would be the first to integrate.

Senior management sought to integrate BetaInsure's high income products into AlphaInsure's existing infrastructure. This was mainly because the division of BetaInsure that was responsible for the higher-end of the market was running at a financial loss, while AlphaInsure's higher-end market division constantly performed very well, both financially and operationally. The implication from an integration perspective was that the business and IT staff of both the firms would be integrated to form one unit, and that the BetaInsure's IT infrastructure would cease to exist and would be integrated into AlphaInsure's existing IT infrastructure. It was expected that this would result in significant cost savings, and that this would also improve the competitiveness of the business as it would reduce resource duplication and enhance the ability to streamline processes across the firm.

The integration process was initiated about a year after the merger and the merger integration project lasted about eighteen months. The integration process both from the IS and business perspectives required intense involvement of various stakeholders. During the implementation of the IS integration process, the project faced a number of challenges such as strained resources, ambiguity of roles, and different organisational structures and culture of the two merging divisions. These condition and challenges provided solid requisite grounds for the phenomena that this study want to investigate to prevail.

3.2.4. Unit of Analysis and Participant Selection

The determination of the unit of analysis should be based on the research questions that are pursued and as well as the type of generalisations that are hoped from the study's findings (Benbasat 1987). Yin (2013) recommends that the main unit of analysis should be at the level being addressed by the main research questions of the study. This study aims to understand how power and politics influence the integration of information systems after a merger. In

order to address the aim, the unit of analysis of the study is the IS division of the integrated organisational unit.

The participants were various stakeholders of the post-merger IS integration project at the case site, especially those who were very involved in the process or those that had a vested interest in its outcome. As much as possible, participants were sought to be from both of the heritage organisations (i.e. before the merger). The participants were the chief operations officer of the AlphaBeta Insurance Holdings, business and IT managers from both the merging entities, and IT personnel from both entities who were responsible for the integration from a technical and business perspective as well as end-users.

3.3.Conceptual Framework

The purpose of a conceptual framework is to explain the key concepts, factors, constructs or variables that are going to be studied and the relationships that are presumed to exist among them (Miles & Huberman 1994). The use of a conceptual framework grounded in existing theory is valuable as it forces the researcher to be selective about the concepts to investigate and it provides conceptual categories that may also be useful in terms of guiding the initial process of designing the research instrument that will be used for data collection, it can also inform the iterative process of data collection and analysis and it can be a final product of the research (Miles & Huberman 1994; Walsham 1995).

The circuits of power framework (Clegg 1989) was selected as a theoretical base from which to construct a conceptual framework for this study because it integrates existing theories of power from sociology and relates them to organisations in order to comprehensively accounts for different forms of power (i.e. causal, facilitative and dispositional); and because of its adaptability with regards to studying power in various contexts (Backhouse et al. 2006; Silva & Backhouse, 1997; Smith et al. 2010). The theoretical framework forms the basis from which the three research questions are addressed.

The first research question *(i.e. how is power exercised in the integration of IS functions of two merging entities and what political activity manifests?)* is concerned with the exercise of casual power. Clegg's (1989) circuit of episodic power is an appropriate element of the analysis in terms of addressing this research question as its analysis involves the identification of agencies (i.e. the *A's* and *B's*), an examination of day to day social relations

between agencies, and how agencies exercise their power by using resources at their disposal to achieve their desired outcomes.

The second research question *(i.e. in what way are power dynamics transformed after integrating IS functions of merging firms due to change in organisational norms, rules, values and work practices?)* is concerned with how the dispositional and facilitative powers of agencies are transformed after the integration. These are accounted for by the circuits of social and system integration respectively. The social circuit of social integration is concerned with "fixing or refixing relations of meaning and of membership" (Clegg 1989, p. 224). It is also described as power that is embedded in the cultural characteristics (i.e. norms, values and beliefs) bound to formal and informal structures of organisation (Silva 1997). The circuit of system integration deals with facilitative power, i.e. the empowerment or disempowerment of agencies due to changes in the techniques of production of discipline (Clegg 1989).

The last research question (*i.e. what role does power play in the institutionalisation of an integrated system?*) is concerned with what is referred to in Clegg's (1989) framework as an obligatory passage point. According to Silva and Backhouse, an obligatory passage point is "an actor network linked by discourses presenting the solution of a problem in terms of resources owned by the agent that proposes the obligatory passage point" (1997, pg. 13). In other words an obligatory passage point is what *A* wants *B* to do. In IS research that applies the circuits framework, information systems change is considered institutionalised if it has been successfully translated into an OPP (see Backhouse et al. 2006; Silva & Backhouse 1997; Smith et al. 2010).

The five main elements of the circuits of power framework (episodic circuit, exogenous contingencies, social integration and system integration; and obligatory passage points) are represented diagrammatically in Figure 2 below in terms of how they are applied in this study. Table 1 below presents the five themes along with what the specific research focus shall be in the context of this study according to the researcher's understanding of the Clegg's (1989) circuits framework; as well as how these concepts address the three research questions at hand.

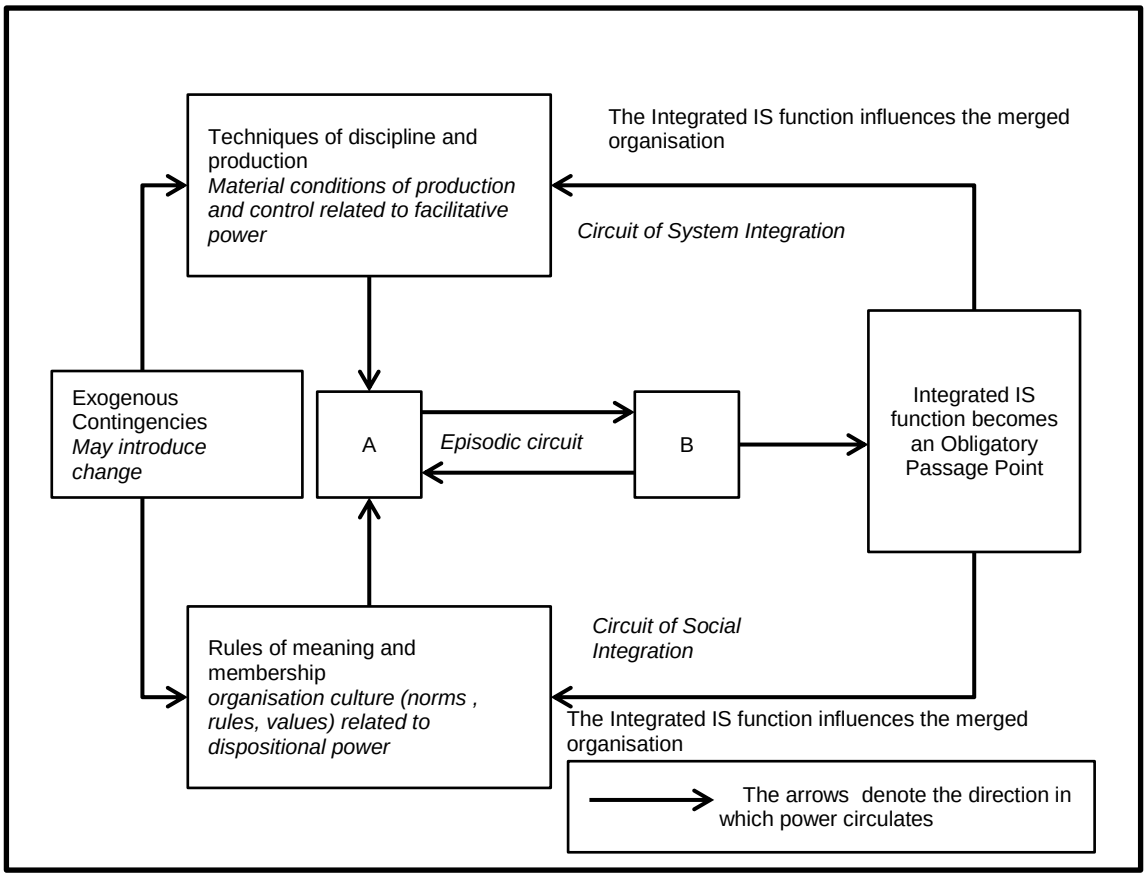

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework based on Clegg's (1989) circuits of Power Framework

Research Question	Concepts in Clegg's (1989) circuits of power framework	Application to Study
RQ1: How is power exercised in the integration of Information Systems functions of two merging entities and what political activity manifests?	**Episodic Circuit of Power** This circuit is characterised by Dahl's (1957) previously cited definition of power: an 'A' exercises power over a 'B' when 'A' makes 'B' to do something 'B' would not otherwise do (A and B constitute different agencies). This circuit also embraces Foucault's (1984) notion of power that that achieves outcomes. In this circuit, power is manifested by agents being capable of controlling resources and establishing alliances to produce their intended outcomes.	The analysis of this circuit is aimed at revealing how agencies deploy the resources and their disposal to exercise power, what power struggles emerged between actors as they attempted to achieve their objectives, what political activity and resistance manifested and what measures were put in place by actors to deal with resistance.
RQ2: In what way are power dynamics transformed after integrating IS functions of merging firms due to change in organisational norms, rules, values and work practices?	**Exogenous Environmental Contingencies** Change that comes from outside the circuits framework that may triggers changes in the circuits of social and system integration.	The main focus of analysis is on what exogenous contingencies prompted the idea of integrating information systems of the merging companies and how they affect circuits of social and system integration.
	Circuit of Social Integration The main elements of this circuit are *rules of meaning and membership* impacting on social relations and alliances (Clegg 1989). This circuit accounts for power that is embedded in the institution's cultural characteristics (norms, values and rules – formal and informal) (Silva 1997). This power is referred to as dispositional power (or symbolic power), its emphasis is on how dispositional power is related to formal and informal structures of organisation.	The key focus was on concepts of organisation structure (i.e. hierarchy of authority, division of labour, span of control, specialisation and standardization, formalization and centralisation; how these were before and after the merger, how they transformed after the integration of IS functions, and what impact did the transformation have on the dispositional power of actors.
	System Integration The main elements of this circuit are *techniques of production and discipline* (Clegg 1989). The System integration circuit sees power exercised through techniques of production and discipline that constrain and channel action in order to achieve goals.	In this context the research focus was on how information systems were used as a means of production, control and discipline before the merger and how power actors have been empowered or disempowered in how they carry out their duties after the integration of IS functions.
RQ3: What role does power play in the institutionalisation of an integrated system?	**Translation of Integration Integrated System into an Obligatory Passage Point** An obligatory passage point is what A wants to B to do. An information system is considered to be institutionalised if it has been successfully translated to an OPP (Humes & Reinhard 2007; Silva & Backhouse 1997).	The research focus was to identify how the information system was introduced, how different agencies perceived it in the beginning, how those perceptions changed and how it was its institutionalisation was sustained by power actors.

Table 1: Conceptual Framework in relation to research questions

3.4. Data Collection

Multiple data collection techniques and sources are typically used in case research studies with the goal that the evidence from diverse sources will converge and support the research findings as this increases the validity of the study (Cavaye 1996; Darke et al. 1998 Walsham 2006). For this study, the primary source of data collection was thorough interviews. Secondary data sources consisted of any documentation that was available (e.g. any memos, email communiqué, organisational charts before the merger and after the merger, news reports and archival documentation) and direct observation.

3.4.1. Primary data: Interviews

Interviews are commonly the key source of primary data in interpretive research as they provide the researcher the opportunity to best access the interpretations that participants have regarding the actions and events which have or are taking place and the views and aspirations of themselves and other participants (Walsham 1995; 2006). For this study the interviews served the purposes of obtaining current constructions of the phenomenon, reconstructions of previous events and verification and corroboration of data from different sources.

There are three types of interviews that are typically used in in the collection of qualitative data:

- Structured Interviews – In a structured interview, the researcher prepares a script in advance to follow as the interview is conducted and there is no room for improvisation. These interviews are often used in survey instruments in the positivistic research tradition (Myers & Newman, 2007).
- Semi-structured interviews – In the semi-structured interview, the researcher prepares some questions in advance, but there is also room for improvisation (Myers & Newman, 2007). Interview questions are be asked in a manner that is open-ended in nature in order to avoid bias and to afford participants the opportunity to reflect on and relate their experiences, however the focus shall is limited to the phenomena the researcher is investigating.
- Group interviews – In the group interviews two or more people are interviewed simultaneously by one or more interviewers, group interviews can be structured or semi-structured (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2011)

For this research, the technique that was adopted was semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were considered because they allow for flexibility, so the researcher could ask questions such that they were based on the initial conceptual framework but still be able to ask any more questions or follow up on data that emerged that may not have been accounted for in the initial conceptual framework. The semi-structured interview was particularly attractive as it affords the interviewer the balance between excessive passivity and over-direction, as if the interviewer over-directs the interview the data obtained is likely to lose much of the richness of interpretation that is sought in interpretive studies while passivity could present an opportunity for data to be gathered that is not in line with the conceptual framework that was designed for this study (Walsham 2005). An interview protocol guided by the initial conceptual framework (see Appendix A) was designed to explore the inter-related phenomena of power, politics in the context of post-merger systems integration. The interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. See appendix B for list of participants that were interviewed.

3.4.2. Secondary data: Documentation & Observation

It is recommended that in case study research interviews should be supplemented by other forms of data in an interpretive study (Yin 1994, Walsham 2006). These include documentation, archival records and direct observation (Benbasat et al. 1987, Walsham 2006). Specific secondary data is typically specific to the research questions with respect to the unit of analysis and the availability of such data (Benbasat et al. 1987; Darke et al. 1998; Walsham 2006). For this study, the documentation and archival records that were used were memoranda that were related to the merger of the two organisations, memos/email announcements about the integration of IS after the merger, organisational charts and news press releases. These were subject to availability and appropriateness in terms of the boundaries that were set by the conceptual framework and the relevance to addressing the research questions at hand (see Appendix C for a list of secondary data used). The use of documentation and archival records was to assist in terms of offering a critical reflection of the social and historical background of the setting so that the audience of this research report can follow how the situation under study unfolded (Klein and Myers 1999).

3.5. Data Analysis

Data collected was analysed through Miles & Huberman's (1994) model for qualitative data analysis. According to this model (See Figure 3 below) data analysis consists of three

iterative processes: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (ibid). The process of analysing qualitative data is continuous and iterative rather than a linear process. These three processes continue to happen during the data collection process as the researcher attempts to understand the phenomenon under study and probes in the later stages of the data collection process.

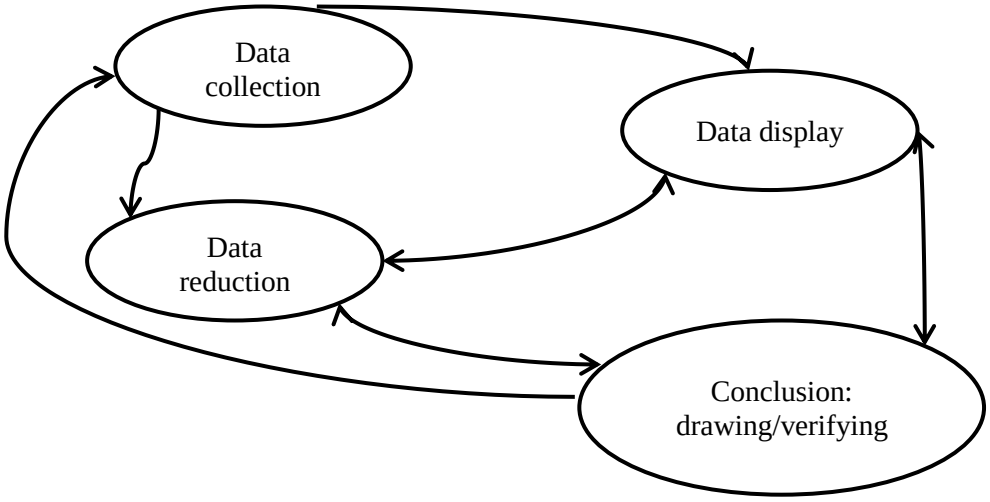

Figure 3: Iterative Model for Qualitative Data Analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994)

Data was collected and analysed based on the conceptual framework based on the circuits of power framework. Guided by the initial conceptual framework, the researcher identified five main categories (or themes) to which data collected would be analysed and reduced to. These were episodic power relations, exogenous external contingencies, social integration, system integration and institutionalisation. From these five main themes, the researcher further identified eleven subthemes based on the researcher's understanding of the circuits framework in relation to the research questions to be addressed. From these themes, and subthemes, initial codes were created. Codes are tags for assigning units of meaning to descriptive or inferential information that emerges in the data (Miles & Huberman 1994, p.56). See Appendix D for the set of initial codes that were created.

The next step in the process (data reduction) involved reading the data that was collected (i.e. interview transcripts, secondary data, researcher's notes) carefully, and assigning the codes to words, phases or whole paragraphs that were identified to be related to the initial categories of codes that were created. This step in the process was done with an open mind and the

researcher was open to discovering recurring themes or subthemes that could not be linked to initial codes.

Data display is the process whereby data is presented in a manner that relationships and meanings between the concepts from the data analysed are illustrated in a way that conclusions can be drawn (Miles & Huberman 1994). This process involved drawing summaries of the data that was collected and linking related data with the major themes and subthemes in a manner that conclusions could be drawn. These conclusions were verified by reflecting at earlier stages of the data analysis, including the raw data, and confirming the significance through checking member checking with participants.

3.6. Evaluation

In order to establish credibility to the audience about the findings and conclusions, the researcher should describe in detail how the certain conclusions were arrived at demonstrate the criteria were used to evaluate and ensure that the findings of the research are credible irrespective of the philosophical perspective or choice of research methods. This study is evaluated based on Klein and Myers' (1999) set of principles for evaluating interpretive research. These principles are: the hermeneutic circle, contextualization, interaction between subjects and researcher, abstraction and generalization, dialogical reasoning, multiple interpretations, and suspicion. It must be emphasized that the Klein and Myers' (1999) insist on not using these 'principles' mechanistically and guard against the idea that they are mandatory, instead they emphasise that they should be used with judgement and discretion in deciding whether, how and which of these principles should be applied and appropriated (Klein & Myers, pg. 71). Table 2 below details how these principles were applied in this study.

Klein & Myers (1999) principle for Evaluation	Application in this study
The fundamental principle of the hermeneutic circle Research conducted in the interpretivist hermeneutic tradition should seek to achieve human understanding of the complex whole through an interactive process of understanding its parts and their relationships.	The researcher developed a narrative of the case and continuously revised it by incorporating feedback from various informants and by validating it with other sources of data. This process facilitated for clarity and elimination of confusion about theoretical concepts that were in the initial conceptual framework and the actual data that was collected.
Contextualization Researcher must take critically reflect on the social and historical context of the case so that the intended audience can make sense of how the current situation that is being studied emerged.	The participants from both the merged entities were asked to give their versions events leading up the integration of IS functions of both the merging organisation. Additionally the researcher also looked at secondary data regarding the merger in order to provide a historical and contextual account of the integration of IS functions of both entities. This historical and contextual account forms part of the case narrative and interpretation.
Interaction between subjects and researcher The researcher must critically reflect on the way in which the data were socially constructed as a result of the interaction between the researchers and participants	In the analysis, the researcher took into account that questions could be posed in a manner that would influence the participants' conceptions of power and politics. The researcher used secondary data and observation in order to complement the raw data from interview transcripts. The initial conceptual framework assisted the researcher to reflect critically on the data collected from the informants.
Abstraction and generalization Relating data interpretation to theoretical general concepts that describe the nature of human understanding and social action.	The case narrative and interpretation is based on themes developed from the initial conceptual framework based on the concepts of Clegg's (1989) circuits of power in order to be able to achieve analytical generation and to expedite a theoretical explanation of the role of power and politics in the integration of IS functions after a merger.
Dialogical Reasoning The researcher must be open to possible contradictions between concepts in the conceptual framework and the findings from actual data that is collected analysed**.**	The researcher took into account the relationship between context, power and social relations in order to relate the data to the initial conceptual framework in order to highlight contradictions between theoretical concepts of Clegg's (1989) circuits framework and the actual findings.
Multiple Interpretations The researcher must be sensitive to how informants may express narratives of the same sequence of events differently.	The interpretation through the circuit' framework identifies different agencies and takes into account why these agencies might interpret events differently and attach different meaning to them according to what their identities are and what their vested interests and objectives are.
Suspicion The researcher must demonstrate sensitivity to possible informants' biases and systematic distortions in the narratives of events that may arise as a result of their desired objectives and positions within organisation.	Secondary data was used in order to validate different interpretations of informants. The researcher also took into account that different objectives of the participants influenced their positions, thus by interviewing participants who held different positions, the researcher was able to see picture from different angles.

Table 2: Application of Klein & Myers' (1997) principles for evaluation of intepretivist research

3.7. Ethical Considerations

The study was approved unconditionally by the Wits University Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), Protocol Number: CINFO/1054. This research was conducted with consideration of the traditional scientific stance with regards to ethics that requires the recruitment and participation of respondents via consent, that the research is conducted in a manner that would not harm or put the respondents at risk and that participants and the organisation where this research was conducted would be protected through privacy, anonymity and confidentiality (Miles & Huberman 1994).

The study was conducted purely for academic purposes with no incentives for financial gain from any sponsor. The study was also conducted in a manner that it would not come up with pre-empted conclusions that are deliberately meant to reinforce a particular view, perspective or product. Consent to conduct the case study was sought from the organisation that formed part of the case. The name and details of the organisation were kept anonymous and they are referred to by pseudonyms in the research report.

Participants were invited and their participation in the interviews that were conducted was by their consent, this was on a voluntary basis without any incentives offered. Respondents were informed that they have an option to withdraw at any given point in time should they wish to. The purpose and objectives of the study were explained to the participants before they agreed in the form of a cover letter.

Permission was sought from the participants to electronically record the interviews for transcription purposes. This research was conducted with an understanding that the information that the respondents shared was sensitive and confidential, accordingly, the participants' details, the organisation which they represent, and the information that they will share were stored and treated with anonymity and in a strict confidential manner.

3.8. Summary

This chapter described the philosophical paradigm guided this research, the overall research strategy and techniques chosen, and the justification of the overall strategy. The chapter then went on to discuss the choice of research method, unit of analysis, participant selection, elements of the conceptual framework that guided data collection and analysis, the methods that were used to collect and analyse data as well as a discussion of how the research was evaluated. There was also some discussion about alternative choices that could have been

taken and why they were not pursued. The limitations of some of the research design choices were also highlighted as well as how those limitations were mitigated. Table 3.3 below outlines a summary of these choices.

Research Design Choice	**Decision**
Philosophical stance	Interpretivism
Research Strategy	Case Study
Unit of Analysis	IT division of AlphaBeta Insurance Holdings
Participants	Various stakeholders of the IS integration project: Chief Operations Officer of the group, Business and IT managers from both the merging entities, and IT personnel from both entities who were responsible for the integration and end-users.
Site Selection	Pragmatic – mainly based on feasibility and the organisation's willingness to participate in the study.
Conceptual Framework	Based on Clegg's (1989) three circuits of power: Episodic, Social and System Integration.
Data Collection	Semi-structured interviews, archival documents, news press release, email communiqué
Data Analysis	Iterative Model for Qualitative Data Analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994) using thematic coding
Evaluation	Klein & Myers' (1999) principles of evaluating Interpretive research
Ethical Considerations	Recruitment and participation of respondents via consent, no harm or risk to participants and the protection of through privacy, anonymity and confidentiality (Miles & Huberman 1994).

Table 3: Summary of Research Design

4. CASE NARRATIVE AND INTERPRETATION

In the introductory chapter, an argument was put forth that the study of power and politics in the context of a post-merger integration context is worth an investigation as some researchers (e.g. McKiernan & Merali 1995; Mehta 2005) have suggested that the post-merger context offers environmental conditions that are ripe for power to be exercised and political action to prevail as power actors are likely to compete for scarce resources, differ on critical decisions and goals. This chapter presents a narrative and interpretation of the case. This case narrative and interpretation is organised around themes that emerged from the analysis that was guided by an initial conceptual framework based on Clegg's (1989) circuits of power framework. The narration forms the bases from which the research questions that were posed in introduction are addressed.

The rest of this chapter is organised as follows:

- *Section 4.1*. describes the background and context of the merger site
- *Section 4.2* describes the episodic power relations (Theme 1) at the merger site, i.e. how actors exercised their power in order to achieve their intended outcomes and what power struggles and political activity emerged.
- *Section 4.3* narrates the exogenous environmental contingencies (Theme 2) at the case site
- *Section 4.4* narrates the transformation of social integration and how it impacted on the dispositional power of actors (Theme 3).
- *Section 4.5* narrates the transformation of system integration and how it impacted the facilitative power of actors (Theme 4).
- *Section 4.6* narrates the role of power in the institutionalisation of the integrated system (Theme 5).
- *Section 4.7* concludes.

4.1. Case Context and Background

In December 2010 two publicly owned entities, AlphaInsure and BetaInsure merged to form AlphaBeta Insurance Holdings. The merger type was horizontal as both firms operated in the same sector and the core business of both firms before the merger were long and short-term insurance, asset management, savings, investment, health care administration and employee benefits. These continue to be the core businesses of AlphaBeta Holdings. The key separator

between the two entities before the merger was the market segments that they served. AlphaInsure operated in the higher end of the market, targeting mainly high income earners and as such, the products that the firm sold were designed to cater for that market. On the other hand, BetaInsure had products that were mainly designed for lower income earners. The strategic objective of the merger was to establish AlphaBeta Insurance Holdings as a leading provider of product solutions to all market segments and geographies, and enable the firm to deliver superior returns to shareholders on a sustainable basis.

The integration approach that the merger took is one that is described in M&A literature as a symbiotic approach, i.e. the executive management realized that there was a critical need for both operational autonomy and strategic interdependence (Ellis & Lamont, 2004), so the operating models of both firms were preserved in the different business units, however there was gradual blending of best practices from both firms. This integration process required both firms to undergo some degree of change as efforts were made to create a combined firm that reflected the core competencies and leading practices of both previous firms. The consolidation in cases where there were vast areas of overlap between business operations was done gradually.

The long term insurance and asset management products of AlphaInsure and BetaInsure were identified as those where there was overlap and were identified by the board as the first to integrate. The integration meant that the long term insurance policies that were under BetaInsure's administration would be transferred to AlphaInsure and that the long term insurance and asset management business units and IT divisions of both AlphaInsure and BetaInsure would be integrated. The role of information systems in both the merging partners was a pro-active one (McKiernan & Merali 1995), i.e. information systems supported the operational and strategic objectives of both organisations and it was envisaged that this would continue to be the case after the merger.

As part of the integration, the objective was to merge the IT systems, processes and IT skills of both firms. The IT integration strategy employed was total integration (Giacommazi et. al. 1997), which meant that the business processes of both merging entities were unified and all applications standardised and centralised onto AlphaInsure's existing IT systems. The IT integration decision that was taken is that of 'take-over' (Giacomazzi et al. 1997), as senior management decided that the integration of IS functions should be done such that the IT

systems of BetaInsure would completely cease to exist and that the business processes and IT personnel and users would be accommodated into the existing IS function of AlphaInsure. In practice, that meant that the existing IT systems and business processes of AlphaInsure would be modified to accommodate BetaInsure's business operations. Senior management also used to integration project as a means to improve some of AlphaInsure's business processes that were considered to be inefficient.

The implementation of the integration project started just under two years after the merger had been finalised and had to be done in accordance with the regulatory conditions that were attached to the merger as well as industry related regulations that are applicable to both merging organisations. Even though senior management employed a positive narrative to communicate the intended outcome of integration, the integration brought a great sense of uncertainty to IT personnel and users of the heritage organisations, owing to the conflicting interests that existed between the main stakeholders, senior management, and IT personnel and users. The following subsections describe these power relations and struggles in more detail by relating Clegg's (1989) circuits of power framework to the research questions that the study aims to address.

4.2. Theme 1: Episodic Power Relations

This analysis of the episodic power relations involves the identification of the main power actors (agency), their objectives, standing conditions, and how they deploy their resources to achieve those objectives. The analysis also reveals how power actors exercise the power (i.e. causal power) and power struggles between power actors as they attempt to achieve their objectives, in addition what political activity and resistance is evident and how resistance is dealt with.

Agency

Studies that adopt Clegg's (1989) framework analyse agency in terms of Dahl's (1957) conception of power, i.e. *A* making *B* do something *B* would not otherwise do. In information systems research that adopts the Clegg's (1989) theory, the *A's* are identified as those who promote the implementation, adoption and institutionalisation of information systems change and the *B's* are those who have to accept it (see Silva & Backhouse 1997, Silva & Fulk 2012, pg. 247). In the analysis of this case, senior management of the holding company are the most powerful by virtue of the authority entrusted to them by the board to ensure a successful

integration and prudent control of financial and human resources. IT personnel and business users from both AlphaInsure and BetaInsure are identified as the *B*'s, in that they are the ones who have to accept, implement and adopt what *'A'* has proposed. According to Clegg (1989), agencies are constitutive (i.e. may contain sub-agencies), and this is significant considering that the *B's* identified here may not necessarily be homogenous given that they are constituted from two organisations with different objectives, desires and may have different access to resources.

Outcomes

From the perspective of senior management, the integration of IS functions after the merger implied an elimination of duplicated resources such IT staff, IT infrastructure and systems. The intended outcomes of eliminating such duplication meant that there would be reduction of costs, gaining of efficiencies and streamlining of processes. Senior management also wanted to avoid human resources issues such as loss of key personnel (particularly during the implementation), reduced commitment and disloyalty, which would ultimately have a negative impact on productivity. The intention of senior management was to have the integration project completed timeously without any delays. The following remarks by participants demonstrate the objectives of senior management:

- *[The objective to integrate is motivated by] costs of licences, when you want to streamline your processes across the group, when you merge or when you do a takeover, there are these duplications where whenever you see them, you must see if you cannot gain efficiencies and use economies of scale. Otherwise what would the point of the merger be?" – Specialist IT Head (A)*
- *"[The objective to integrate] was financially related. So that means that if I have got duplication how much money can I save by putting it together. So it's either cost or its growth which means that can I use this to sell more policies or to increase my market share…" – Chief Operating Officer (C)*
- *"Ideally, you will want to achieve all of this with your best people here" – IT Manager (B)*

These objectives were ultimately linked to the underlying motives of the merger, i.e. to be able to leverage economies of scale and ultimately increase market share. Despite the fact that the intentions to integrate IS functions were articulated positively through rhetorical devices, employees were concerned about a multitude of issues following the merger and the

integration of these IS functions. These included job security, loss of autonomy, possible transfers and uncertainty about career prospects as illustrated by the following comments:

- *"You know what part of the reason why you want to eliminate redundancies but that also comes at a cost of people's positions being compromised". - Segment Head (E)*
- *. "…even if [our positions are going to] be irrelevant [after the merger], but at least they could give some incentives, such as better salaries while we're still doing this, so that even if you are jobless, there is a bit of a buffer". – Technical Lead (D)*

As the above quotes illustrate, the intended objectives of senior management were interpreted as potentially threatening to IT personnel and business users, more especially BetaInsure's employees. Their main concern appeared to be mainly job security, maintaining autonomy and being able to carry out their work tasks in a manner that was consistent with how they used to. For employees who had felt that the IS integration would not particularly threaten their livelihood in the organisation, particularly IT personnel, their objectives were to benefit from financial gains in the form of performance remuneration bonuses that were promised if the integration of IS functions was completed within the budgeted timeframes.

Social Relations

In this study, the analysis of social relations focused on the relationships between managers and their subordinates at both heritage organisations and intra-group relations between personnel from both heritage organisations. Social relations between senior management and employees were initially characterised by mistrust and insecurities as the objectives of senior management implied that there would be organisational reconfiguration of structures and existing social relations which employees perceived as potentially threatening. These sentiments of insecurity are captured in the following response:

> *"It was difficult to appreciate or understand [the need to integrate so quickly]. It was not long after we merged, and they started punting this thing and before we knew it, we were doing it. There was some bit of insecurity just with the merger, now imagine when your department becomes the first to be affected, it means you're [going to] be the first casualties" – Call Centre Agent (E)*

Senior business unit managers made efforts to improve social relations by communicating their intentions and attempting to allay the fears of IT personnel and users by continually reassuring them, as one systems developer said:

> *"The fact that there had been some assurances over time definitely went a long way, and that they were able keep us calm and be frank with us about our futures. So that made a difference." – Technical Lead (D)*

Throughout the integration, particularly in the beginning, management had to work hard to ensure that personnel from both heritage organisations identified with the intended objectives of senior management.

> *"You try making it a win-win situation for everyone, even though it is not always possible. There were definitely casualties as you may know, but for those that stuck with us, there were certainly rewards at the end of the day, remember my motto is that let us travel the journey together" – IT Manager (B)*

There was consensus amongst respondents that good social relations between senior management and employees were critical in terms of gaining commitment for their earnest participation in the integration project. The researcher's interpretation is that social relations, particularly those between senior management, IT personnel and users, lay the groundwork for day-to-day interactions during the process of integrating IS functions. Good social relations can alleviate actions that can undermine the intended actions to integrate, particularly in a post-merger environment where uncertainties due to organisational change prevail (Cartwright & Cooper 1990).

Power Struggles, Political Activity and Resistance

In the episodic circuit, agency power struggles emerge as a result of agencies exercising their power through their standing conditions in order to achieve their intended outcomes. In this case, senior management exercised (episodic) power by directing the business unit and IT departments of AlphaInsure and BetaInsure to integrate their IT personnel, business users, and IT systems. The standing conditions (i.e. power lever gates) for senior management included the authority entrusted on them by the board, discretion on policies and plans as well as control over financial and human resources. Financial resources in terms of remuneration bonuses and job security were lever gates as they were used to incentivise IT staff to complete the project in the required timeframe. Control over human resources meant that

senior management could deploy more personnel to ensure that the project was completed timeously.

In certain instances, senior management were able to incentivise staff that they identified as critical to the integration project financially. In this case, it was IT and business users who were considered critical in the integration project who were incentivised through retention packages and better career prospects after the merger. This was done to discourage them from resigning. Financial incentives in the form of performance bonuses were also included in the organisation's remuneration structures as this was seen as a measure to lock high performance employees in during the integration phase. The following quote illustrates this:

> *"You need to put remuneration structures in place, to retain those people, they will not have any loyalty to it, so you need to use money, to retain them." – Technical Lead (D)*

Senior management also relied on their access to formal communication media. The Chief Executive Officer sent out email communiqué regularly in order to communicate the intended benefits of the merger, and the benefits of the integration project in order to limit any negative perceptions of the integration of AlphaInsure and BetaInsure's IT and business units, and to reassure employees about the future.

The power struggle dynamic between senior management, IT personnel and users emerged on account that agencies (i.e. senior management and IT and business users from the merging entities) had different objectives and anticipated outcomes, which in some instances were conflicting. Despite the idea of an integrated IS function being articulated by senior management through concepts such efficiency, cost savings, and the ability to be responsive to a challenging market, the integrated system was perceived as a threat to the status quo, as some IT personnel and users, especially those from BetaInsure felt that their career prospects were at risk.

One senior manager noted the setting up of structures to manage the IT integration project as one of the earliest episodes of power struggles as these appointments were contested by IT personnel and users from both heritage organisations. The contentious point was that IT personnel and users from the merging organisation wanted their preferred candidates to be appointed in order to represent their own interests. The idea of having preferred candidates appointed into the integration steering team for IT personnel and users meant that the

integrated system would be implemented such that their roles and responsibilities would be preserved in the new structures that would be created after the merger. One senior manager noted:

> *"When you appoint a new structure, the two businesses will know that if you appoint this guy, it will have an implication on the strategy of the business, so normally they would lobby, to get their people in. Then they know there is protection for them".*
> *– Chief Operating Officer (C)*

Furthermore, users wanted the business processes to be in line or akin with how they were previously, so that they could continue to carry out their tasks in a manner that is similar to how they used to, as one IT manager from AlphaInsure said:

> *"Some people will always want things to be exactly how they were before, what they know best, what they are used to. But life is not like that. Life is dynamic. So you need to think in terms of what is best to do for the company, not what is best to do for me" –IT Manager (B)*

During the pre-implementation phase, a steering team was appointed and was tasked with the responsibility of formulating an implementation plan for the integration. The plan had to have a detailed list of what needed to be done, how it was to be done as well as the assigning of responsibilities. Although IT personnel and users of both heritage organisations had vested interest in the planning process as it provided insight on what the integrated system would look like, they could not influence the process directly and instead depended on those who represented them in the strategy formulation to carry forth their interests as one respondent said:

> *"…you get that sort of engagements during the planning phase, where people are not willing to budge, and sometimes they make impossible demands and trying to coerce others into buying into what, in terms of which technology route to take or how should the to-be process look like, just so that they can have their statuses and authority intact" – Technical Lead (D)*

IT personnel (managers and developers) from the merging firms used their knowledge of work processes, discretion on systems design and development as well as their commitment to applying these towards the set objectives of the integration project as their standing conditions. Both IT personnel and users used their standing conditions in order to mobilise

and influence other groupings in order to support their demands that the outcome of the process reflects their desired or intended outcomes. This was also a source of power struggle.

The struggle was between IT personnel from both AlphaInsure and BetaInsure, and also between senior management and employees. The point of contention was that in some cases the objectives of senior management and those of other employees were not always aligned. This is evidenced by the fact that some groups for example wanted to keep systems similar to how they were before the merger while senior management felt that some processes that were inherent in the systems of the merging organisations were inefficient and needed to be revamped in order to gain efficiencies. This is illustrated by the following quote from one line manager:

> *"Once you concede to those then you end up with what you started with, parallel processes, duplication, which defeats the whole purpose of trying to find efficiencies and make the IT team lean and so forth. You will still have your fixed costs the same. So if it's an issue of capacity, it is important to address it immediately, it is always important to keep focus and remind the implementation teams what the bigger goal is, what it is that we are trying to do." – Specialist IT Head (A)*

Another source of power struggle related to senior management, and business and IT managers' battle with some of the employees who were not committed to the project of integrating because of the perceived threat regarding what the consequences of the integration would be. Despite the assurances that management made to personnel regarding their prospects after the integration period, uncertainty about job security and career prospects remained a key issue during the implementation phase. This was particularly notable in the case of BetaInsure's employees. In order to implement successfully, management relied on the expertise of IT personnel from both heritage organisations and the knowledge of business operations by the users. These in turn were the standing conditions of employees or levers that they would use to exercise power. As a result, some of BetaInsure's employees would not provide solid commitment to the integration project as they perceived the exercise of power by senior management to be a threat to their livelihood and as such some employees either resigned and others were threatening to resign as one IT manager attested:

> *"It is difficult to get commitment from people who feel threatened about their positions… remember that these are people who saw themselves as threatened. They*

are being taken over. So, why should they be involved in the process that is going to make them irrelevant?" – IT Manager (B)

In order to mitigate the risk of resignations and low staff morale during the implementation, senior management utilised their control over financial resources as leverage and offered financial incentives to IT personnel from both heritage organisations in order to obtain their commitment. IT personnel from AlphaInsure were incentivised with performance bonuses while BetaInsure's personnel had to sign legally binding contracts as they were deemed to be more likely to resign from the organisation.

"You cannot use exactly the same way to motivate people as their needs may be different. In the case of the [BetaInsure's personnel], we identified some of the key people that we needed to do the integration. We offered them retention packages. And some took them. You will know that some people felt upset and resigned, because they mainly felt as if they were been taken… so those are some of the strategies that we used. Otherwise we would not have done this thing within 18 months... [AlphaInsure's employees] know that being involved in these big projects is also important. They know that if you do this thing well, in the time that we have set out, there is set to be rewards for that sort of performance." – IT Manager (B)

Senior management also used tactics that were political in nature in order to achieve their intended outcomes. These included having informal meetings with IT personnel and users that they regarded as key to the integration and influencing them to achieve the outcomes that were desired by them and the board and rally their colleagues behind the decisions. In some instances some IT personnel and users were incentivised with better job prospects. In order to achieve their intended outcomes, IT personnel and users relied on their knowledge, particularly technological knowledge such as systems development skills and knowledge of business processes. This testifies to the Foucault's (1977) suggestion that power is intimately bound up with socially constructed knowledge as was acknowledged by one IT manager:

"One of the biggest challenges in this particular case, as with other mergers in my experience in general, is that when you are actually doing the job, the kind of information that you need, is in people's heads. There is no documentation… You cannot [successfully do an integration] when all you have is data. Let me put it to you this way, for an integration to be successful, you need context. Data means absolutely

nothing without context. So you need that type of context. And where does it lie? In people's heads." – IT Manager (B)

As the previous comment illustrates, system and process knowledge were potent power levers for IT personnel and users who were well versed in them. Those who were considered influential identified some IT personnel and users that they considered to be most knowledgeable as 'key resources'. This is consistent with Clegg's (1989) view which resonates with that of Foucault (1977) that power and knowledge are not independent, but rather associated by a relationship where they are in fact two sides of the same social relation. In this way, senior management formed alliances with those they considered as most knowledgeable and incentivised them with better career opportunities. The power/knowledge relationship was also utilised by IT personnel and users who were well versed with system implementation, process and product knowledge as political tactic by intentionally misrepresenting how the intended outcomes and objectives of senior managers would be to the detriment of their career positions in the organisation, as one respondent said:

"There was some misinformation in some cases, you never know whether it was genuine or not but in some cases you would find a lot of rumour mongering, furthering insecurities. Sometimes it is meant to work on people's emotions and make them want to follow a particular agenda, sometimes to influence the agreed design, that sort of tussle. Not bad faith may be it is people who are trying to get their way." – Technical Lead (B)

In order to overcome the challenge of sabotage by propaganda, senior management relied on their access to communication media, in the form of setting up workshops and forums in order to be able to communicate their intended outcomes positively and to be able to limit any negative information or opinion about the integrated system.

"It's not about fairness it's about transparency. It's about explaining to those who have to do it such that they understand why you do it, and what you do, [how you are going to] do it, and you need to give them certainty about their positions, even if they know that they not [going to] be here, it's better to tell them, so the process is to be transparent and honest". – Chief Operating Officer (C)

The use of communication media in order to advance the rhetoric intended to rationalise the decision to integrate was used as a response by senior management to quell any other alternative to staff as was conceded my one IT systems analyst.

"…the way out to show us that this is what has to be done, [for example] it made financial sense to integrate, from the presentations that they had done at the time, it was difficult to dispute that if the whole project was done well it would benefit the merger" – Technical Lead (D)

According to (Clegg 1989), power is never one-way traffic: *A* rarely gets a *B* to accede to its direction without some resistance; resistance to episodic power is almost unavoidable due to agencies realizing that their intended objectives are either threatened or at odds with those of other agencies. The analysis of this case revealed that senior management had contrary views to those of IT personnel and users with regards to whether or not there was any form of resistance that manifested. Senior management felt that there was some resistance while IT personnel and users felt that there was no resistance as they had no opportunity to participate in decision making on whether to integrate or not.

Resistance was identified by some senior managers as refusal to accept organisational change and that it manifested itself as 'turf-protection' or 'self-preservation'. Senior management presented the objective of the integration as rational and in the best interest or the organisation in keeping with what (Keen 1981) refers to as "corporate interest" or the "rationalist" and thereby sustaining their view that resistance to change or innovation is purely brought about by unreasonable protection of vested interests.

The approach that the researcher adopted when analysing reasons for the existence of resistance was to seek to understand why people resist by considering different agencies and their possible reasons for resisting. As in practice, resistance may not be just for the sake of resisting change but could be as a result of the proposed change threatening the interests of individuals by limiting their autonomy, reducing their influence, or adding to their workload (Keen 1981). In line with this, IT personnel and users had a different meaning to the proposed integration as some perceived these objectives to be potentially threatening to the career prospects that they had in their respective organisations before the merger, as illustrated by the following quote:

"In the beginning there was a lot of resistance. Remember these are people who feel that they are being taken over by another company… You know what happens when people feel threatened, they will not be too forthcoming as you do the integration, and

you need them because they have the [intellectual property]" – Chief Operating Officer (C)

In this case, the type of resistance behaviour identified could be regarded as passive resistance or alternatively mild resistance as it manifested itself in the form of delay tactics, excuses, persistence of former behaviour, and withdrawal (Lapointe and Rivard 2005). IT personnel and users resisted in more subtle ways which included reluctance to show commitment to the project, reluctance to share information and knowledge about existing processes. This behaviour was interpreted by management as their rejection of changes that they were called upon to make in their work tasks as the following quotes illustrate:

- *"You will find a situation where people are not willing to do things. Sometimes they shift the goal posts, or they have not done things because so and so still has to do this"*
- *"Sometimes people may not be as cooperative as you want them to be. And they can do that intentionally, to frustrate the process… It is difficult to get commitment from people who feel threatened about their positions"*

On the contrary, IT personnel and users that were interviewed denied that there was any form of resistance, despite management's accusation of actions such as lack of cooperation, and blaming of others in order to delay the process of integration.

- *"I don't think there was resistance as such as the decision to integrate was already made, so I would not say there was resistance" – Specialist IT Head (A)*
- *"Usually once EXCO has made a decision to do things, they usually get their way. So there would not have been any resistance. Particularly because those decisions are strategic… so all had to oblige." – Technical Lead (D)*

In terms of this study, the above quotes do not illustrate or serve to confirm that there was no resistance; instead they confirm that there was no organised resistance that could have consolidated itself into an effective form of agency. The marshalling of resources to act upon any form of resistance by agencies depends on the capacity of those agents to interpret their standing conditions and exercise them to achieve their objectives (Clegg 1989).

In analysing resistance, the researcher's judgment is that despite evidence of resistance (i.e. interpreted as deliberate activity to prevent the achievement of one agencies objectives by the

other), resistance by both IT staff and users was outflanked by senior managers who through the deployment of their resources could financially incentivise and in some cases offer promotions to individuals that were identified as key staff and thereby locking them down for the duration project. Senior management also used political manoeuvres such as creating allies with some of the IT personnel beyond formal structures in order to advance a glowing narrative of their intended outcomes. These measures counteracted resistance successfully as it discouraged effective resistance against the intended objectives of senior management.

4.3. Theme 2: Exogenous Environmental Contingencies

Exogenous environmental contingencies are factors other than the exercise of episodic power that may trigger changes in social and system integration. The analysis of this theme focused on other external factors other than the exercise of power in the episodic circuit, which initiated the integration of the IS functions as well as further considers other external factors should be taken into account in the integration of IS functions. According to Clegg (1989), the adoption of innovation in organisations is a calculated response to the external environment and uncertainty.

In the analysis of this theme, the competitive environment in which both AlphaInsure and BetaInsure operate was the main driver of the merger, including the integration of the upper market segment business of both firms and by extension the integration of their IS functions. The integration of the two business units was a response to the market conditions as it would offer the merging entities the opportunity to be responsive to market competition. The following quote by one senior manager illustrates this:

> *"We were not just integrating for the sake of integrating; we also wanted to make sure that in the future, we could ensure that we could introduce new products easily and reduce time to market". – Segment Head (E)*

The industry that the merging entities operated in is also subject to industry regulation, more specifically regulation that is targeted towards firms that operate in the financial services industry. Prior to the integration, the IT systems and the ways of work by both the entities were such that they complied with the relevant regulatory statues of the financial services industry. Accordingly, the conditions of the merger and the integration of business units and IS functions was such that even after the merger, the business processes, ways of work, and IT systems are still compliant with the relevant regulations. This implied that the integrated

system had to be implemented such that the firm remained compliant with industry regulation.

Another condition related to industry regulation was that both AlphaInsure and BetaInsure would now operate under one financial services licence. The implication of this was that the IT systems would also have to be compliant with the requirements of the amalgamated licence. It was for that reason that senior management also found it efficient to integrate the IT systems as that would have ensured that the changes relating to regulation and licencing were centralised. The following comment from a news press release demonstrates that:

> *"Following the creation of AlphaBeta Holdings, the group owned duplicated licensed entities and IT systems. The consolidation of IT systems is underway, with a view to realize the efficiencies and cost effectiveness that were anticipated with the merger. The proposed legal amalgamation (in terms of Section 38 of the Long-term Insurance Act) is a major step towards the rationalisation of AlphaBeta Holdings' legal entities." –AlphaBeta Holdings Press Release*

It was envisaged that the existing processes would be optimised such that they were more efficient in that process tasks would completed by using human and technology resources in a cost-effective manner. Furthermore, new processes were designed such that they would be easier and quicker to adapt to changes in market competition and to regulation with less effort. The analysis revealed that exogenous contingencies in the context of this study can be narrowed down to the fact that competitive and regulatory environments have an impact on the circuit of system integration (i.e. techniques of production and discipline in terms of business process change) and do not have substantial impact or influence on the circuit of social integration.

4.4. Theme 3: Social Integration and Dispositional Power

Clegg's (1989) circuit of social integration consists of two main concepts: rules and meaning, as well as rules of membership. Consistent with other studies that have used Clegg's (1989) framework (e.g. Silva & Backhouse 1997; Smith et al. 2010), the analysis of the circuit of social integration in this study involved the examination of rules and norms, values, particularly those embedded in the relationship between information systems and various groups. The analysis also considers these rules, norms and values are related to dispositional power. With regards to the research questions at hand, the researcher was interested in how

social integration would be transformed for both former AlphaInsure and BetaInsure's IT personnel and business users after the IS integration functions, and how that would impact the dispositional (or symbolic) power of actors.

There were notable differences in social integration and how dispositional power was configured and distributed in the two merging organisations. The researcher's analysis is that these differences manifested mainly in the relationship between superiors and their sub-ordinates, specifically the manner in which employees were expected to perform their tasks, and business process design. According to one IT manager, these differences were mainly attributed to the different markets that the merging partners operated in. As noted by one IT manager:

> *"There were vast differences in culture… They even knew this when they were doing due diligence. We never did things the same way. You should remember that AlphaInsure operates in the medium to upper market segment, while BetaInsure operated in the entry-level segment… Complementarily also means having to accept differences in culture etc… Complementing each other does not mean that you are the same. Because BetaInsure works on the entry level market, expenditure is watched very closely". – IT Manager (B)*

BetaInsure was characterised by high levels of formalisation and centralisation. The hierarchy of authority was rigid, job authorities and job functions were elaborately and narrowly defined, particularly at lower levels. Job functions were highly specialised and as a result IT personnel and users had very limited discretion in terms of how they performed their tasks. Their participation in decision making in the organisation was also limited as most decisions were taken at higher levels of the hierarchy. In contrast, AlphaInsure had an organic form of organisation that was characterised by decentralised decision making where IT personnel and business users at different levels of management were able to make decisions when executing their duties such as design issues and financial decisions. Furthermore, AlphaInsure had fewer hierarchical levels and loosely defined job opportunities. The differences are evidenced by the following quotes:

- *"One was a more formal, [BetaInsure] was a formal top down, culture, very formal, very rules based, where the [AlphaInsure] one was a much more informal, much more empowerment etc…" – Chief Operating Officer (C)*
- *"I think the [AlphaInsure] type of working is [such that] there are no limits in terms of what you can or cannot do, it depends very much on the individual, which is what I*

like. There is also not that much structure and formal positions, that type of a thing. People are defined by what they actually do, not titles. Now with us on the other hand there are boundaries, much more formal interactions". – Technical Lead (D)

During the process of integration, the 'rules of meaning and membership that were embedded in AlphaInsure served AlphaInsure's IT personnel and business users better in that they were in a position to make decisions quicker, due to less stringent protocols in their organisation compared to their BetaInsure counterparts. Further, AlphaInsure's personnel did not appear to be using 'delay tactics' as one senior manager indicated. An IT manager from BetaInsure said:

"There was more power entrusted on middle managers at AlphaInsure rather than with us. In that they can make financial decisions easier than us. They can easily get more people if they want to and there are not too many hurdles once they have decided. With us it's difficult as there is more red tape. I think that is just one thing, which makes you wonder why because they are also a big company just like us. Maybe another thing is that they are also a bit more flexible in terms of doing things, there are no thorough definitions in terms of how they do their work, a bit more adaptive. This is why maybe they do projects quicker than us. They do not have too many meetings and so forth and they do not deliberate on things too much"
–Technical Lead (D)

These differences in norms, values and rules, both formal and informal, also appeared to manifest in how systems were designed in that although both organisations had similar business processes, BetaInsure's systems were designed to have multiple levels of authority as well as many approvals in between work tasks while AlphaInsure's systems had significantly less levels of authority and approval points. AlphaInsure's IT manager noted:

"We experienced that on their side, there was a lot of red tape [in their IT systems]. You need to get approval from different levels of authority before you can do stuff. That is one thing that I would say that we are vastly different about. We do not have that much red tape here" – IT Manager (B)

The next part of the analysis of social integration involved examining how changes in rules of meaning and membership as introduced by the integration by IS functions would transform the dispositional power of agencies. Given that both organisations had different social

systems with respect to the hierarchy of authority, division of labour, formalisation and centralisation, it was expected that the integration of IS functions would transform the dispositional power of actors as this power is derived from those power structures. This is Law's (1991) concept of power storage. Immediately after the merger, the CEO of AlphaBeta Insurance Holdings communicated the desire to have a single or unified organisational culture and appointed a Human Resources management team to lead organisational development work streams across the organisation with a view of having a formal organisational design, culture and values. The following is a quote from a CEO email communiqué that was released:

> *"AlphaBeta is focusing on becoming a values-based and values-led organisation. Towards the end of last year we completed the first stage of defining our core values through broad consultation across AlphaBeta. The six core values for AlphaBeta, are – accountability, diversity, excellence, innovation, integrity and teamwork – truly exemplify the kind of business we strive to be and will thus shape our group culture.*
> *– CEO Email Communiqué*

In the same communiqué, the CEO recognized that establishing a unified 'culture' across the merging organisations was not going to be an easy task based on the fact that traditionally, the merging parties had served two distinct markets and as such there was going to be need for contingency. The CEO mandated senior managers of each division to be responsible for the rollout process. As the merged division was the first to integrate, it was expected that it would be the first to ensure that the espoused values of "accountability, diversity, excellence, innovation, integrity and teamwork" were entrenched; however this did not appear to be the case.

The desire for AlphaBeta was to define a new set of values and norms for itself, however the findings are that the organisational culture of AlphaInsure prevailed over that of BetaInsure. This was largely because BetaInsure's business and IT units were absorbed into AlphaInsure's business unit, and that in a way provided AlphaInsure the position of dominance over BetaInsure despite the fact that the merger was a 'merger of equals'. Thus the rules of membership and meaning of AlphaInsure were reified into the integrated information system (i.e. obligatory passage point) while those that were prevalent in BetaInsure before the merger were not absorbed into the integrated system.

As the social integration of AlphaInsure was preserved, BetaInsure's employees had to adapt to AlphaInsure's norms, values and rules that dominated. In the researchers' analysis the concepts of dispositional power were more related to influence of power actors, their levels in the hierarchy as well as their decision making authority. For AlphaInsure's employees (IT and business users), these remained largely the same, with exceptions being that fact that they had no influence and could not make decisions on business processes or system functionality that was very specific to BetaInsure's previous processes.

The impact of change in social integration had a larger impact on the dispositional power of former BetaInsure employees. Firstly, as they were integrated into 'flat' organisational structure as opposed to a hierarchical structure that was inherent in BetaInsure, the decision making authority of junior and middle managers was now significantly moderated as in the AlphaInsure culture, the discretion on decision making was not centralized but was spread across various roles irrespective of formal positions. In contrast, social integration after the integration of IS and business was appreciated by some BetaInsure employees who were comfortable with less rigid job designs as it allowed opportunities for growth in terms of being able to perform some tasks that they were not able to perform in their previous roles, however others felt that the dispositional power that they previously had by virtue of being specialists in performing certain functions was somewhat reduced.

The analysis of social integration at this case site shows that post-merger IS integration can potentially change the decision making authority and influence of power actors, particularly if the merging entities have vastly different norms, rules and organisational structure. This case analysis also shows that the integration type can also have an influence on which of the two merging entities' norms, values and rules can be most dominant. The fact that the social integration of AlphaInsure dominated was due to the fact that IT staff and personnel of BetaInsure were to be integrated into AlphaInsure's existing structures. The fact that the new values that were espoused by senior management were not immediately adopted suggests that it is easier to adapt into existing organisational norms, values and rules.

4.5. Theme 4: System Integration and Facilitative Power

The circuit of system integration consists of techniques of production and discipline. Clegg (1989) argues that the concepts of production and discipline cannot be separated and thus need to be analysed together. The analysis of this circuit focused mainly on identified

business processes as the core techniques of production and discipline, and focused on how the changes in production and discipline that were introduced by the integration of IS functions had an impact on the facilitative power of actors. According to Clegg (1989), changes in techniques of production and discipline can 'empower' or 'disempower' actors, or alternatively, they can either increase or decrease the capacity of power actors to exercise their job functions (Davenport & Leitch 2005).

As previously mentioned, the type of integration was that of 'takeover', i.e. the IT systems of AlphaInsure were the most dominant and the systems of BetaInsure were to cease after the integration, it was clear from the initial analysis that there certainly was going to be transformation of the business processes of the merging partners. At a high level, it initially appeared that both organisations had very similar IT infrastructure and business processes given that they both served the same industry, however, during the actual planning of the implementation it became clearer that there were some nuances, particularly in terms of differences in business processes as indicated in this comment:

> *"In most of the cases, you will find that our processes are very similar. It just gets tricky when you look into more detail, particularly given that we both service clients in different markets. Which is where the challenge usually is as when you do due-diligence, you do it at a very high level, but when you actually have to do the stuff, you realize that is not always what you thought it was… We have extra steps out in some of our processes, or some of the stuff we don't do. Even small things like how you structure your data. This is not stuff that the clients sees, but it is a big issue with the implementation teams. The small stuff can determine whether something takes a week or a month. That is where the challenge is". – IT Manager (B)*

The reason that was put forward by respondents as to why their processes were different and why some new tasks and processes had to be created was also attributed to the fact that both heritage organisations served different markets. As an example, in the case of AlphaInsure, the only form of payment that was accepted for insurance premiums was by bank debit, while AlphaInsure also accepted cheque, bank deposits and direct payments. These differences led to contestation over how the integrated system should be implemented.

> *"So that is where we could win some battles, in that we could show that you cannot just say we should shift everything to a debit system as not everyone does debits. Besides it meant that the clients would now have to accept the new way as part of*

your change. So you could make a case that you cannot tell the customer that, look, we are moving your product to AlphaInsure and they are going to integrate the systems into one and sorry, please set up a debit order. It does not work like that. So they were willing to make those concessions, which in a way was good because it still meant that some of us could still be relevant while the client is also happy. So some of the sales ladies could still keep their jobs as there are some things we could simply not get rid of. Otherwise we could have a bad name in the market with our clients, so we kept those things". – Technical Lead (D)

The integration of business processes had the most impact in this circuit in terms of changing the dynamic of power between IT staff and users of the heritage organisations, more especially for BetaInsure's IT and business personnel as their processes, work functions, and tasks would be transferred to the existing AlphaInsure's business unit and the work processes at AlphaInsure were modified to accommodate BetaInsure's business processes. In some cases some of BetaInsure's processes were made obsolete, and subtasks within processes were also declared obsolete and there was increased automation. That changed the way in which tasks were distributed and classified.

"There were some differences in process, most of what we did was automated, but [in their case] there was some human intervention. So that already meant that some roles would be no more and there would have to be different structures in terms of trying to accommodate how we do things" – IT Manager (B)

Business process change also resulted in in many roles being obsolete. This had an impact on BetaInsure's IT personnel and business users, and some of them were transferred to other organisational units while some of them resigned. As a result BetaInsure's employees were disempowered by the loss of collective knowledge and organisational memory on their processes and functions as a result of some of their colleagues being absorbed into the integrated business unit, transferred to other parts of the business or having resigned from the company. Junior IT personnel and staff that remained were disempowered as they lacked the influence which came from associations with powerful people in the IT development team that they had before.

The discretion to redesign and implement AlphaInsure's existing business processes to accommodate BetaInsure's was left mainly to the IT implementation team, which consisted of selected members of business analysts and system developers from both the merging

entities. AlphaInsure's IT personnel also took advantage of the integration opportunity to redesign some of their existing processes that were not efficient, thus IT personnel were empowered as the integration offered them the opportunity to enhance their system. Although the enhancements were favourable for AlphaInsure's users, it appears that they were dissatisfied with the fact that they had a more increased workload by the integration as not all BetaInsure's users were absorbed. Furthermore, they felt that the integration had disempowered them in that they were expected to learn about the system changes that were made to accommodate BetaInsure's processes in a short period of time with not enough time allocated for training.

Senior management also mandated that the integrated system should have a reporting module that would be able to generate weekly reports that would assist them to have more visibility in the data and gain insights into business metrics of interest such as the number of new product sales, number of insurance policy alterations and number of policy claims processed. Though this could be interpreted as a disciplinary measure, it was not interpreted by users and business unit managers as a measure that would increase or limit their facilitative power. These changes increased monitoring and surveillance over users and operations, thus increasing their capacity to discipline or sanction behaviour that is not in accordance with their intended objectives.

The analysis of the circuit of system integration focused on how transformation of techniques of production and discipline may empower or disempower agencies. Business process change had the most impact on the integrated system. Due to the integration of business and IT units and business process change, new roles were created and others discontinued, meaning that social relations were constituted and new agencies and alliances formed. The analysis of this theme shows how changes in techniques of production and discipline (mainly business process change in this case) can changed the facilitative capacity of agencies by enhancing facilitative power of others while moderating it or reducing if for other power actors.

4.6. Theme 5: Power and Institutionalisation

The analysis of this theme is concerned with the role of power in the institutionalisation of an integrated IS function. Institutionalisation is the process through which a social order or pattern becomes accepted as a social 'fact', or alternatively an information system is institutionalised when associated practices have become routines that can be regarded as

organisational habits (Avgerou 2000; Silva & Backhouse 1997). In this context (i.e. post-merger), institutionalisation involves firstly the deinstitutionalisation of old practices that were inherent in the IS functions of the heritage organisations and the re-institutionalisation of the integrated system.

This study's analysis through the circuits framework focuses on the role of power in the institutionalisation of an integrated IS function. From the theoretical perspective adopted in this study, an information system is institutionalised if it has been successfully translated into an obligatory passage point (Humes & Reinhard 2007; Silva & Backhouse 1997), i.e. when it is a conduit through which traffic must necessarily pass (Clegg 1989, p. 205). The sociology of translation proposes steps of translation, these are problematization, interessment, enrolment and mobilisation (Callon 1984; Clegg 1989). In the analysis of how the integrated IS was translated into an obligatory passage point by power actors, the analysis phase examined how these steps of translations were carried out by senior management.

The first step of translation is *problematization*, i.e. how a power actor (or agency), through rhetorical devices communicates a problem for which it presents a solution. In the case of the merger between AlphaInsure and BetaInsure, senior management presented that it would be inefficient to have the IT and business units of the top upper market segment of the merging business units running in parallel when they appear to have similar processes and products. With the problem well-articulated to organisational members, senior management subsequently suggested the integration of business units and thus by extension the integration of IS functions as it would solve the problem of duplication and bring about potential benefits. The following comment appeared in one of the vision statements presented by senior management:

> *"[the integration] would reduce complexity, standardize and consolidate technology to ensure cost efficient and sustainable solutions". – IT Vision Statement*

The next step in the process of institutionalisation using the sociology of translation is referred to as as *interessment*, i.e. the negotiations in which agencies are persuaded to identify with what is now going to be their new roles with the view of isolating them from the counter action of competing agencies who may be attempting to achieve their objectives by offering alternative transitioning through translating different obligatory passage points (Silva 2007).

"[my subordinates] had to share the vision and the overall objectives that are set out…if you do that you are one with the people. So even in this case, I would say that we always make sure that we are all in the same page [in terms of what needs to be done]. That's we all understand that we are all set to benefit if this thing goes well. If the company is doing well in general, it also means that we will all do well." – IT Manager (B)

Following the formal and informal discussions by senior management to integrate, negotiations were held between senior management and personnel to persuade all staff that the integration was in their best interest and that of the newly merged organisation. The third step of translation is that of *enrolment*. In this step, alliances are consolidated through bargaining and making concessions. Actors are defined and formally take on roles and act them out. Senior management appointed a programme manager to co-ordinate the integration of all the relevant business units. IT personnel, business unit managers and users from both heritage organisations had critical and specific functions that they were required to carry out in the integration process. The decisions around what design decisions to take and trade-offs or concessions were made in consideration of the issues raised by the users in terms of the usability of the system. The end goal for the integrated system was considered be a suitable if there was a singular conduit to carry out work tasks. It is also through these negotiations and concessions that the system was able to acquire its legitimacy after it was implemented.

The last step in the process towards achieving institutionalisation is referred to as *mobilisation*. Successful mobilisation implies that actors become spokespeople of the implemented IS change, in other words, this mean that power actors are fully behind the system and that they see it in their own terms as a conduit through which they can execute their tasks (Callon 1984). Successful mobilisation implies that IS change has been successfully translated into an obligatory passage point. Initially there were challenges with regards to successful mobilisation as some users felt they had not been trained sufficiently on how to perform their daily tasks successfully. This was compounded by the fact that some of the tasks that users had previously performed manually were now automated in the integrated system as one user said:

"It was difficult to work as we used to, this was made challenging because as we were able to do some of the things ourselves before the [integration], now most of the things had to be done through [the integrated system], there was very little training

and this was done when the project was already in the testing phase, it was stressful as we were expected to do our daily tasks and at the same time do the training" – Call Centre Agent (F)

The response by senior management was that the complaints regarding training were a form of resistance that had existed in the earlier implementation phases and that had made it to post-implementation as well. In response, senior management increased the amount of contact time that was required for training purposes. Further subsequent changes were made to the integrated system after it was implemented in order to address some concerns that some users had expressed in order to maintain the institutional discourse of efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

"We are now in a better position to align our processes in line with the new operating model. We can now be better responsive. We can do things faster; it would have been difficult if there were not some consolidations. There are going to be more integrations, as we realize efficiencies." – IT Manager (B)

Business unit managers motivated for system enhancements for increased automation and monitoring of business operations, perpetuating the discourse that empowerment of such expansions increasing visibility into the operations of the business and surveillance over business overs. In particular, increased automation further positioned the system and obligatory passage point as users could not use any other means to perform their tasks.

In this case, institutionalisation (i.e. successful mobilisation) was evidenced by the fact that the integrated system was widely used, with little or no resistance from business users. Furthermore, the business processes and work tasks of the merged entities were represented in the new integrated system. The integrated system had a high level of automation with very little room for human intervention, meaning that users had to navigate through the integrated system in order to complete their daily tasks. Almost a year after the system was implemented; it had become socially accepted as the way of work. This observation suggested to the researcher that the system had been institutionalised as institutionalisation of an information system occurs when it is sustained and legitimised by the power actors and individuals in an organisation and is visible when the usage of system becomes stable, routinized and embedded within the organisation's work processes and value chain activities.

A successful translation was also evidenced by the fact that the most powerful agencies (senior management in this case) were able to achieve their intended goals and that the information system was institutionalised (Humes & Reinhard 2000; Silva & Backhouse 2003). In this case, it was further evidence of institutionalisation as the changes that were brought about by the IS integration, i.e. changes in techniques of production and discipline and norms, meaning and values as related to organisational structure and power hierarchy, were also stabilised in that they were now considered as the norm or normal practice. Ingrained in the fibre of the institutional structures for both the merging partners; thus, in order to maintain the institutional discourse of efficiency and cost-effectiveness triggered the deinstitutionalisation of some existing practices from both entities and the institutionalisation of some new practices.

The analysis of the institutionalisation of the integrated system in this case site confirms the assertion by Silva & Backhouse (1997) that the institutionalisation of an information system can be understood from a power perspective. In this case, the institutionalisation of the integrated system was enforced through a successful deployment of financial and human resources e.g. allocation of training budget and IT personnel. However, the case also demonstrated that institutionalisation can be sustained through the advancement of the discourse of the initially intended benefits of the system by most powerful actors, i.e. senior managers. In this case, long after senior management had ceased to be directly involved, lesser powerful actors continued with the discourse that the integration was beneficial and served the interests of the organisation.

4.7. Summary

This aim of this chapter was to present a case narrative of the integration of IS functions at AlphaInsure and BetaInsure through the themes identified in the initial conceptual framework which was based on Clegg's (1989) circuits of power framework. In the analysis of causal power in the episodic circuit, it is clear that causal power is the most evident due to its ability to secure outcomes. Due to the fact that agencies identified in our analysis had different objectives and in some cases contradictory objectives, the exercise of power was met by both resistance and political activity. In this case power actors from different organisational contexts were expected to collaborate in order to achieve an outcome that had potential to threaten their livelihoods; thus the implementation of an integrated IS after a merger is contested through the exercise of power and political activity by actors or agencies with

vested interests in the nature of the outcome. As Clegg (1989) states, power is never exercised without any resistance. As highlighted in this case, there was some resistance from IT personnel and business users from both heritage organisations. In the end, agencies that were able to apply their resources effectively were most likely to achieve their objectives, and in this case, this was evidenced by the institutionalisation of the integrated system.

According to Clegg, dispositional power is embedded in 'rules of meaning and membership'. The researcher's analysis investigated the norms, rules and values behind formal and informal structures of power and what sustained them. Both organisations had different organisational cultures and this was mainly attributed to the different markets they operated in. Senior management sought the integrated business unit to have a new organisational culture that was in line with what the whole merged organisation should have, however, the culture that prevailed after the integration was that of AlphaInsure as it appeared to be the dominant one.

Due to business process change and organisational restructuring, system integration was the most transformed or destabilised, thus creating new agencies and social relations. In that process, the facilitative power of some actors was greater than before while the opposite occurred for others. The role of power in the institutionalisation of the integrated system confirmed that power plays a role in how information systems are adopted and institutionalised. In conclusion, the narrative of the case study through the five major themes (i.e. episodic power relations, exogenous contingencies, system integration, social integration and institutionalisation) demonstrates that Clegg's (1989) framework is a useful tool in the analysis of power in organisations, particularly in the interpretive paradigm. This analysis through the initial framework unravelled how episodic power manifests during the integration process and how facilitative and dispositional power embedded in the systems of the heritage organisation were transformed in the integrated system; and how power contributed towards the institutionalisation of the integration of IS functions of two merging entities.

5. SYNTHESIS

The aim of this chapter is to provide a synthesis of the research findings in relation to the research questions and provide a discussion of implications for practice. This is done through a re-examination of the research questions as well as a discussion of the findings that emerged from the data that was collected and analysed as reported through the case narrative presented in the previous chapter. The rest of this section is structured as follows:

- *Section 5.1* re-examines the research questions and how they are addressed in relation to the researcher's interpretation of the case.
- *Section 5.2* provides a discussion of the findings of the study as well as their implications.
- *Section 5.3* concludes.

5.1. Re-examination of Research Questions

A review of the literature suggested that power and politics could play a role in the implementation of an integrated IS after a merger as agencies compete for scarce resources and also due to the fact that the merging companies may have different cultures, organisational structures and work practices (McKiernan & Merali 1995; Niederman & White 2013; Riad 2005). The aim of this research was thus to examine through an interpretive case study, how power struggles and politics manifest in the integration of IS functions of two merging entities and how post-merger IS integration alters power dynamics that were inherent in the two merging firms. The following subsections examine how the research questions framed in the introductory section of this report are addressed through the case study interpretation.

RQ1: How does power get exercised in the integration of IS functions of two merging entities and what political activity manifests?

This research question is addressed mainly through the episodic circuit of power and through the theme of episodic power relations (see section 4.2). By answering this research question, the objective is to identify the main power actors, what their objectives are; and to identify how they were able to exercise their power utilising the resources at their disposal. In this case study senior management, IT personnel and business users were identified as the main power actors.

Senior management were identified to be the most powerful actors. By virtue of the authority entrusted to them by the board as well as their control over human and financial resources, they were able to exercise their power by directing IT personnel and users to integrate according to senior management's intended objectives. The intended objectives to introduce IS integration were to reduce costs, gain efficiencies, eliminate duplication of IT and human resources, and streamline business processes across the value chain. The objectives of senior management were articulated through rhetorical devices as in the best interest of the organisation consistent with those identified in existing IS literature specific to post-merger IS integration (Alaranta et al. 2005; Graeber 2004; Robbins & Sylianou 1999).

The objectives of senior management were perceived by some as threatening job security, authority and career prospects of other role players (i.e. IT personnel and business users) while other role players interpreted it as an opportunity to expand their career prospects. The objectives of IT and business personnel were mainly to keep their jobs, maintain their status in the organisation after the integration, better prospects in terms of future careers while some employees sought to continue to perform their tasks in ways that are consistent with how they used to perform them before the integration. IT and business users exercised their power over senior management by influencing how the systems of the two entities should be integrated, mainly leveraging on their discretion and participation in the analysis of design, development of the integrated system as well as their knowledge of system processes in a way that would be favourable to their interests.

The conflicts in objectives of senior management and IT personnel and business users were the main source of power struggles and political activity. Examples of power struggles in this case was differences in consensus from senior management, and IT users and personnel from both the merging entities as to which members should form part of the steering committee of the integration project; tussle between senior management and IT personnel of both merging organisations was due to the fact that different power actors preferred representatives who would ensure that the system is integrated in a way that furthers their own interests. IT personnel and business users from both merging entities also got involved in power struggles amongst themselves, each entity driven by the desire to continue to perform their tasks in ways that are consistent with how they used to perform them before the integration.

IS researchers (e.g. Lapointe and Rivard 2005; Markus 1984; Silva 2007) have observed that the exercise of power is usually met with some form of resistance. Similarly power must be considered along with politics, as power that is exercised outside the formal channels of authority (Silva 1997). In this study, resistance emerged in the form of dissonance, lack of participation and discontent by IT personnel and users mainly motivated by uncertainty. IT personnel got involved in political activity by withholding information and in some cases sharing information reluctantly while some of the users deliberately spread incorrect information regarding what the outcome of the integration would be. Senior management also employed political behaviour in order to achieve their desired objectives. They achieved this by mobilizing target senior staff and those considered most beneficial to their cause from both the heritage organisation to fulfil their objectives using informal platforms. In some instances, they promised better career prospects and in others financial incentives in the form of retention packages and pay bonuses.

The analysis of this case validates the assertion that agencies (power actors or a group of power actors) who successfully deploy the resources at their disposal in power struggles are the most likely to achieve their intended outcomes (Clegg 1989). In this case, senior management were successful in the integration of IS functions of the merging entities owing to their access to financial and human resources, formal mass communication media and being in a position to counter any form of resistance and political activity that would threaten their intended objectives. Similarly IT personnel and users with intimate knowledge of the IT systems, business process and more superior innovative abilities were some of the most powerful actors besides senior management. These included software developers, business analysts and some users who as "subject matter experts" had influence on decisions such as the design of the integrated system, as these were able to ascertain that once integrated, the system could still carry on their interests.

The power struggles that emerged during the implementation of the integrated information system (or obligatory passage point in the case of the researcher's analysis) indicate that even in the post-merger context; information systems are carriers of power interests. This is revealed in this case through the nature of the power struggles, political games or politics and resistance behaviour. The analysis with regards to the episodic circuit in relation to the research question answers the research question by addressing the nature of power struggles and political activity and partially explains why these come to fore.

RQ2: In what way are power dynamics transformed after integrating IS functions of merging firms due to change in organisational norms, rules, values and work practices?

This research question is informed by the capacity of information systems change in this context to reconfigure power dynamics in the organisation as post-merger IS integration can reconfigure work processes, organisational structures, and cultural values embodied in the organisation (Keen 1981). This research question is addressed in two parts. Firstly by analysing how organisational norms, values and beliefs inherent in the merging entities, were transformed by the integration of IS functions and subsequently impacted the dispositional power of agencies. Secondly, by considering how material conditions of production and measures that were taken to ensure organisational discipline following the integration of IS functions had impacted on the facilitative power of agencies.

From a power perspective, the focus on organisational norms, values and beliefs in this study is related to how power is embedded in organisational structures and how it is interpreted by power actors. In this case, AlphaInsure and BetaInsure had different forms of organisation, one characterised by high levels of formalisation of centralisation while the other had an organic form of organisation that was less formal, with fewer levels of authority and largely decentralised in terms of authority and decision making. These differences had an implication on the way roles were structured, levels of accountability and bureaucracy, and how information systems were designed. It was thus expected that after the merger, and the subsequent integration of IS functions, there would have to be a unified form of organisational structure, which by implication would have an impact on the authority of power actors and agencies.

With regards to this, the researcher's finding is that the nature of the merger and the IS integration type is likely to influence whether social integration is transformed or whether social integration of one of the merging entities prevail. As demonstrated in this case, the enacted values were that of AlphaInsure as the nature of the integration type was that the business and IT units of one of the merging entity was to be absorbed by the other, meaning that the rules, norms and values largely remained those of the organisation whose IS functions were dominant. This finding is consistent with (Cartwright & Cooper 1990) that the way in which power is distributed is likely to favour the power actors of the entity whose cultural values are dominant. By consequence, the constitutive agencies of BetaInsure had their dispositional power (e.g. authority and influence) altered while in the case of

AlphaInsure's employees, the constitutive agencies were entrenched. Furthermore, the nature of the IS integration defined new rules of meaning and membership for BetaInsure's personnel.

Another finding with regards to the integration of IS functions altering social integration is that it can also change the basis from which dispositional power is derived. In the case under study, the sources of authority for BetaInsure's IT employees and business users was reconditioned as they were absorbed into an existing IS structure in which dispositional power was not founded on seniority due to levels of hierarchy, but rather on lateral knowledge of business processes and IT expertise. AlphaInsure's employees did not experience a disturbance in social integration as the nature of the integration was that the institutional order remained largely preserved.

The second part of the research question deals with how facilitative power changes when the material conditions of production are altered. The results of this study show that the integration of systems, IT personnel and business users after a merger leads to a reconfiguration of work practices, specifically business process change and organisational restructuring. During process redesign in the implementation phase, there were revelations of instances taken-for-granted historically instituted processes that were embedded in systems that benefited certain groups (particularly business users) over others and also having been largely unquestioned. In other cases process redesign also revealed some process inefficiencies that were inherent in the systems of both the merging partners, thus the integration offered the opportunity to rethink why things were done in a certain way in order to gain efficiencies and reduce cost as was in line with the mandate from senior management.

The circuit of system integration is the major source of change in the circuits of power framework because material conditions of production might empower or disempower actors in a way that they perform their productive activities (Silva & Backhouse 1997). Business process change had the most impact on the integrated system. Due to the integration of business and IT units and business process change, new roles were created and others discontinued, meaning that social relations were constituted and new agencies and alliances formed.

Some agencies were empowered implying that that their facilitative power was enhanced, while other agencies' facilitative power was moderated. In this case, for example, the facilitative power of middle management from BetaInsure was considerably moderated by virtue of having to be absorbed by an organisation that had fewer levels of hierarchy and a lateral decision making structure. AlphaInsure's business users on the other hand, expressed dissatisfaction by what they perceived as an increased workload that was brought about after the integration due to the fact that only some of BetaInsure's users were absorbed.

RQ3: What role does power play in the institutionalisation of an integrated system?

This research question is posed from a standpoint that the power plays a fundamental role in the institutionalisation of an information system (Silva 2007). In the context of this study, this question is addressed by examining the deinstitutionalisation of established practices and norms and the re-institutionalisation of new practices that were introduced by the integration of IS functions. Simplistically, this means the exit from one institutional form to another, organised around different principles or rules. Effective institutionalisation means that some of the previously established and accepted social norms and facts that were characteristic of the previous institutional order (i.e. before the merger) would have to be abandoned and that a new intuitional order would reflects the intended objectives of the most powerful actors.

In the analysis of this case, senior management set the tone for the new institutional order by discrediting the old institutional form prior to the integration of IS functions as inefficient, particularly when considering operational costs. The desirable situation that they presented would be the integration of the IS functions in order to achieve efficiencies. To achieve their objective, they exercised their (casual) power by imposing that the IS functions of both entities be integrated. By virtue of how senior management deployed financial and human resources, they were able to organise other IT personnel and business user to rally behind their cause and were also able to counter any organised form of resistance to the institutionalisation. The finding with this regard is that casual power (i.e. deployment of resources to achieve outcomes) plays a necessary role in the initial stages of the institutionalisation of an integrated IS function after a merger as through its exercise, resources can be arranged in a way to entrench the imposed new institutional order and counter an effective form of resistance.

Beyond the most powerful actors, others can defend the legitimacy of the implemented system if it reproduces the legitimacy of their authority (i.e. symbolic or dispositional power). As this case demonstrated, IT and business managers sustained the rhetorical discourse of senior management of the system beneficial to the firm well after the direct involvement of senior management. To their benefit, IT and business managers advocated for implemented system, a move that helped influence senior management to allocate human resources to ensure that further expansions and system updates occurred. Institutionalisation of a system is sustained through its legitimacy among power actors in the organisation (Avgerou 2000). In this case, further expansions of the system in this case enhanced the legitimacy of the system as it was interpreted by some users and some IT personnel as a clear symbolic that the integrated system is meant to be the conduit through which tasks are carried out.

The analysis of this case also indicated that changes in techniques of production and discipline can facilitate for an institutionalisation of a system, particularly when those changes are likely to empower agencies that can advocate for its institutionalisation. In this case, system enhancements that resulted in increased automation and lesser human interaction in the execution of process tasks reinforced institutionalisation as it somehow ascertained the system as the only way users could conduct their daily duties, thus ensuring that the system became an obligatory passage point (i.e. a conduit through which stuff happens). These changes augured well particularly with business managers as it allowed for better surveillance over operations.

The achievement institutionalisation represents the "stabilisation and fixing of rules of meaning and membership, and techniques of production and discipline, in an organisation field which is capable of extensive reproduction over space and time are the central issue" (Clegg 1989, p. 241). As demonstrated in the analysis of this case, institutionalisation is sustained as long as changes in both circuits of social integration and system integration do not materially transform the authority and facilitative capacity of power actors, regardless of whether they are the most powerful actors or not. This finding gives credence to the assertion that information system's institutionalisation is sustained by the action of actors who may not be the most powerful in the organisation (Humes & Reinhard 2007; Silva & Backhouse 1997).

5.2. Discussion of Findings and their Implications

The main focus of this research was to examine how power is exercised by different actors in a post-merger IS integration context. This following subsection provides a discussion of the main findings with regards to the main research question, i.e. how power and politics manifest in the post-merger IS context, how power configuration embedded in organisational practices changes after the merger, how the change in existing ways of work can alter power configurations and the role of power in the institutionalisation of an integrated system.

Contextual bases for power struggles, politics and resistance in post-merger IS integration

The first major finding in this case was that conflicting interests between different actors was the source of power struggles. In this context, IS change was introduced by senior management, with benefits such as cost-effectiveness, efficiency and removal of duplication across the value chain; however, these objectives also threatened the employment prospects of some employees of the merged entity as some of the roles that they performed were to be non-existed, or their authority diminished. The successful implementation of an integrated system requires the collaboration and participation of power actors who may be negatively affected by the change that is being introduced. Change, when considered to be unfavourable is likely to be viewed negatively and therefore resisted (Joshi 1991).

In a post-merger IS context, for those intending to introduce the integrated IS, power struggles, political activity and any form of resistance towards the change is undesirable. The analysis of this case also demonstrated that political activity can take different forms depending on whom it is directed to. In this particular case, it manifested in the form of employees of the merging entities lobbying for their preferred candidates to be part of the steering committee of the integration project, blaming each other for delays in the implementation as well as rumour mongering that purported to display the intentions of senior management in a negative light. Senior management also used politics in the form of lobbying IT personnel and business users who they considered to be critical to the integration outside the formal channels.

Senior management carrying out an integration project generally deploy any form of resources (or power levers) at their disposal effectively in order to achieve their desired outcomes. Such resources are typically deployed in a manner that the integration process presents a favourable position, particularly for those whose participation throughout the

process of integration is critical for a successful integration. In this case, senior management used financial and human resources at their disposal to incentivise key stakeholders, including those whose roles were to be redundant after the integration, by means of retention and performance bonuses.

Similar to various contexts in IS research, user resistance is also a potential salient reason for which the implementation of an integrated IS after a merger could fail. In this study, the main cause of resistance in the implementation of the integrated system was mainly due to emotional uncertainty amongst staff emanating from the risk they perceived regarding their career prospects after the integration project was complete. In mergers and acquisitions, organisational change as a result of change in information system is often associated with downsizing and major restructuring, thus employees are likely to become concerned about issues that may cause them stress. These include job insecurities, concern stifled career prospects, loss of identity and autonomy, lack of information as well as possible transfers (Cartwright & Cooper, 1993). As demonstrated in this case, resistance manifested as a harmful covert behaviour that stemmed mainly from the fear and stress of information systems change, and it had potential to sabotage the integration effort. In this context, resistance and political activity should not be interpreted as an intentional means to sabotage the implementation but also as an emotional response to what could be a stressful situation of uncertainty.

The effect of post-merger IS integration on organisational culture and power

Mergers and acquisitions are often considered to be one of the greatest disturbers of culture in the merging entities. Organisational culture fit in mergers and acquisitions is often related with merger success. Similarly in post-merger information systems integration, organisational culture plays an important role in the effective implementation of IS integration. Extreme differences in organisational culture between the two involved in a merger are negatively associated with merger effectiveness: those firms with high synergy potential that opt for exploiting synergy may encounter culture clash (e.g. Weber & Pilskin 1996).

This research differs from existing research that usually examines the role of culture in terms of merger performance; instead it considers how cultural differences alter the power dynamics that were inherent in the organisations before the merger and how they have changed after the merger. This study focused on organisational cultural differences with

regards to the norms, values and rules (written and unwritten) and with regards to managerial relations, decision making autonomy and IT governance. There were explicit differences from both merged entities in this regard as the one organisation was characterised by high levels of formalisation and centralisation while the other had an organic decentralised decision making processes with fewer hierarchical levels and loosely defined job opportunities.

Due to the fact that the IT personnel business users of the BetaInsure would be incorporated into the existing AlphaInsure structures, and that the IT system of AlphaInsure absorbed existing BetaInsure infrastructure, the organisational culture that prevailed was that of AlphaInsure. In terms of the power dynamic, the respondents felt that there was no difference in organisational culture after the IS integration, thus meaning that there was no disruption in the dispositional power that was inherent in the roles and functions. On the other hand, BetaInsure's employees experienced a considerable difference in organisational culture in that they found it considerably different to the way things were done in their heritage company. As could be expected, the design of the integrated system followed the cultural values of the dominant system in that it had fewer levels of authorisation to complete tasks, which was a different cultural shift for former BetaInsure employees.

This cultural shift had a different impact on BetaInsure employees with regards to dispositional power. As an example, with regards to decision making autonomy, for some employees, particularly those who are senior, this translated to their dispositional power being moderated as the decision making authority was decentralised, while some of the more junior employees appreciated the change as it meant that they were more empowered to make decisions that were traditionally taken by more senior employees. Similarly with job design, some employees were most comfortable with less rigid job designs as it allowed opportunities for growth in terms of being able to perform some tasks that they were not able to perform in their previous roles, however others felt that their dispositional power that they previously had by virtue of being specialists in performing certain functions was somewhat reduced.

The design and implementation of the integration also entrenched AlphaInsure's norms, rules values with regards to managerial style, job delegation, and decision authority. This outcome related to the reflexive relationship between IT implementation and organisation culture.

Even though most literature tends to focus on how organisational culture shapes system design and implementation, a few studies have also concentrated on how the way systems are implemented could influence or transform the culture of an organisation. The finding with regards to an IT system entrenching a particular culture after merging entities have integrated their systems is consistent with other studies (e.g. Doherty & Perry 2001; Kappos & Rivard 2008) that have shown that information system change can have an impact on existing norms, rules and values of the organisation.

Change of work processes and the empowering or disempowering of agencies (power actors)

The integration of information systems of two organisations after a merger is done with a strategic expectation that it will reduce costs, eliminate duplication, streamline processes and gain efficiencies with a view of supporting the overall motives of the merger (Alaranta et al. 2005; Graeber 2004). The analysis of the case study indicated that the integration also offers the opportunity for the rethinking and the change in the design of the work processes of the merging entities. The process of interrogating existing processes can expose taken-for-granted historically instituted processes that were embedded in systems that benefited certain groups (particularly business users) over others that had been largely unquestioned.

The results of this study confirmed that changes in post-merger IS integration can lead to change in existing work practices, which can in turn change the material conditions of production and measures put in place to enforce discipline. The change may impact on the capacity of agencies to perform their duties; this is what Clegg (1989) refers to as their facilitative power. In this context, system integration meant standardizing and integrating processes which led to increased centralization of information systems. This was deemed favorable (or empowering) by the IT and business managers as it led to increased automation which subsequently promoted organisational discipline by constraining users to follow prescribed processes. This in turn, had a potential to empower or disempower users as it could either increase or moderate their facilitative power, their decision making authority or accountability.

The finding with regards to how IS integration following a merger, impacts the facilitative power of individuals is not novel. It is consistent with numerous other studies that focus on IS and power. Several information systems researchers (e.g. Bariff & Galbraith 1979; Markus

1981; Orlikowski 1994; Sia, Tang, Soh & Boh 2002) have examined how the introduction of a new IS innovation of information systems change in various contexts can tamper with the facilitative power of individuals and groups in organisation with regards to how they perform their tasks. These studies have found that IS change can be empowering or disempowering or both at once. Information Systems change can be considered favourable or unfavourable based on how intrusive such a change can be to the power inherent within these groups with respect to the status quo.

The integration of IS after a merger should be done with careful deliberation of how the desired change may alter the facilitative power of actors, as it could threaten the interests of groups and individuals by encroaching into their territory, limiting their autonomy and influence or adding to their workload. This may assist in explaining resistance and political actions that seek to undermine the implementation of a new information system. The researcher's view with regards to this implication is informed by literature (e.g. Robey & Markus 1984; Keen 1981) that discourages a purely rational perspective on information systems change, but rather more tactful approach that sees IS change as both a rational and political, thus resistance to change as a signal from a system in equilibrium that the costs of change may be perceived to be greater than the likely benefits. By having a thorough understanding of how IS integration can alter the interests vested in the facilitative power of power actors; those who propose its integration may be better positions to understand why groups power actors may behave differently to change.

Post-merger IS integration and institutionalisation

The role of power in the institutionalisation of information systems have been recognized by IS researchers (Silva & Backhouse 1997; Humes & Reinhard 2007). In the context under which this research was conducted, the role of power in the legitimisation and institutionalisation of the integrated system after the merger were significant. Senior management were initially responsible for the institutionalisation of the integrated system mainly by imposing the integrated system on users, and ensuring that duties that would be carried out by users were mostly automated warranting that users had to use the integrated system in order to perform their daily tasks.

The institutionalisation of the integrated system was later promoted through the exercise of power by other stakeholders, i.e. IT and business managers. Its further expansion was also

based on the exercise of power by other individual agents capable of imposing new rules based on institutional discourses. These knowledgeable agents played a fundamental role in the expansion and sustenance of the system through the discourse that the integrated system had brought about positive changes. This finding is consistent with Avgerou's (2000) assertion that innovation is adopted and maintained because of its acquired legitimacy and that its institutionalisation may not necessarily have to continue to rely on the most powerful resources.

Lastly, institutionalisation can also be entrenched by changes in techniques of production and discipline (in this case business processes) if these are done in a way that the integrated system becomes the main conduit through which users can carry out their tasks. Such changes to the integrated system are likely to be proposed by agencies whose authority and decision making capacity is favoured by its institutionalisation. In the analysis of this case, these changes were proposed by business managers as the integration of IS functions allowed for better surveillance over operations.

5.3. Summary

This section provided a review of how the three research questions that were posed in the introductory chapter were addressed through the interpretation and analysis of the raw data that was collected. Clegg's (1989) framework provided the theoretical base from which an initial conceptual framework that guided the data collection and data analysis phases of the research. By re-examining the individual research questions and reviewing how they are addressed by the narrative an interpretation of the case, it was demonstrated in this chapter that the research questions that were posed were indeed legitimate and worthy of an empirical investigation. Furthermore and in closing, this study does show that the theoretical foundation on which this study was conducted was suitable as it led to the collection and analysis of data in a manner that could address the research questions that were posed.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The motivation to conduct this research arose after a review of the literature revealed that there have not been enough IS research on the role of power and politics in the context of a post-merger IS integration. This study focused on how power and politics play a role in implementation and institutionalisation of an integrated system following a merger and how once implemented the integrated system changes power dynamics that were inherent in the merging firms. This concluding chapter summarises the main findings of the study, its contributions, its limitations as well as suggestions for future research. The rest of this chapter is structured as follows:

- *Section 6.1* provides a summary of this research as well as its findings.
- *Section 6.2* reflects on the utility on the theoretical framework that that study was based on.
- *Section 6.3* discusses the contribution of this research.
- *Section 6.4* discusses some of the limitations of this study.
- *Section 6.5* concludes by sketching areas where there exists potential for further

6.1. Summary of Research

This thesis examined existing IS literature about mergers and acquisitions. While existing literature acknowledges the relevance of studying power and politics in the post-merger context, a survey of the literature also reveals that there is a lack of such studies. This research was conducted with the purpose of addressing that research gap. The purpose of the study was explanatory in that it sought to understand what power struggles and politics emerge during the integration of information systems after a merger, how the integration changes power dynamics and the role that power the role in the institutionalisation of the integrated system.

Chapter 3 outlined that this research was conducted through a case study in the interpretive paradigm. The study was conducted at a division of holdings firm that was a result of integration of business and IT units of a product house of two insurance firms, AlphaInsure and BetaInsure. An initial conceptual framework based on Clegg's (1989) three circuits of power theory guided the data collection and analysis. Data was primarily collected through semi-structured interviews and secondary data was also used.

Chapter 4 presented a narrative of the case study based on five themes derived from the initial conceptual framework. The narrative of the case based on the researcher's interpretation of Clegg's (1989) three circuits of power does confirm that power and politics do actually matter during the implementation of a post-merger integration and the institutionalisation of that system thereof. The narrative also reveals that the integration of IS functions of two different firms following a merger can also change power dynamics that were inherent in the organisational cultural practices and working practices of the merging entities, due to the fact that the integration offers the opportunity to re-examine those practices. The interpretation and analysis of the narrative should offer answers to the three questions posed.

Chapter 5 discussed the results of the case study in relation to the research questions and the overall findings of the research. The first research question concerns the exercise of power during the integration of IS functions of merging entities. In the re-examination of that research question the episodic circuit revealed how agencies deploy resources at their disposal in order to achieve their desired outcomes. The analysis also suggested that the exercise of power, political activity that may manifest, and any resistance to power are highly contextual, in that in a different context (e.g. different merger conditions), power may be exercised by agencies in different ways depending on what outcomes they seek. Similarly, agencies may respond to the exercise of power differently depending on the intricacies of the merger. This affirmation is consistent with the bases of the study of power in the interpretive paradigm, and gives credence to the assertion that power is best studied through interpretive research in order to be able to take into account different nuances that may be specific to a particular setting (Orlikowski 1991;Walsham 2005).

The second research questions was designed to probe how the integration of IS functions can bring about changes in the dispositional and facilitative power of agencies. The research question is preemptive as it suggests that IS integration of two merging entities is likely to bring about organisational change. This research question was posed in appreciation that even though there are contradictory accounts of the consequences of information system change as a driver of organisational change (Robey & Boudreau 1999), post-merger context is predisposed to the sort of organisational change that would provide for this question to be addressed. As this case showed, some power actors' authority and bases of dispositional power was transformed due to the integration. Further, some agencies were empowered and

others disempowered depending on what techniques of production and discipline were altered in relation to the previous institutional order.

The last research question concerns power and institutionalisation. Institutionalisation in the context of this study entailed both the merging entities having to forego practices embedded in the fibre of their previous firms and transitioning and settling into a new mutual institutional order. The findings of the case study corroborate other similar studies that investigated institutionalisation from a power perspective (e.g. Avgerou 2000; Humes & Reinhard 2007; Silva & Backhouse 1997) and collaborates that power does indeed contribute to the institutionalisation of information systems change. The analysis of this case showed that episodic power plays a role particularly in the initial stages of institutionalisation as it can restrain any forms of resistance and political activity that is antagonistic to the widespread use and acceptance of an integrated IS function as an obligatory passage point. Institutionalisation is sustained by power actors who perceive that the continued use and institutionalisation of the integrated system maintains their authority and influence in the organisation as they can become spokespeople by mobilizing for its benefits.

It is often put forward that one of the challenges of studying power and politics is the reality that there are different conceptualisations of power and what constitutes politics or political activity. The use of the initial conceptual framework based on Clegg's (1989) circuits of power was valuable in the data collection and analysis as it required the researcher to be upfront on the conceptualisations of power that would be investigated. The analysis of this case demonstrates that Clegg's (1989) circuits of power is an appropriate theoretical basis from which this studies research questions could be addressed.

6.2. Reflection on Theoretical Framework

This study shows that the circuits of power framework is a useful theoretical base for the investigation of power relations in the context of the integration of IS functions of merging firms. The analysis of the case happened in three distinct stages. Firstly, through the analysis of episodic circuit in order to unravel how power is exercised by actors, what power struggles and political activity emerge and if there is any resistance and how it gets dealt with. The next stage of the analysis was to examine how change introduced by the episodic circuit impacts both the circuits of social integration and system integration respectively, and how these two circuits are in turn affected by exogenous contingencies. The last phase of the analysis

involved the study of how changes in the circuits of social and system integration stabilise and how the integrated information system becomes an obligatory passage point (i.e. becomes institutionalised). The following paragraphs will discuss a reflection on the utility of the framework based on each of the three phases.

The episodic phase of the analysis was fairly straightforward. Firstly was the identification of agencies (power actors), their objectives, the means that they have at their disposal to achieve those objectives (i.e. standing conditions) and social relations amongst them. What made the analysis of the episodic circuit slightly challenging is that the concept of agency is not clear in Clegg's (1989) theory. In this regard the discretion on what would constitute agency is that of the researcher. The researcher's approach with this regard was to refer to how agency is applied and analysed in IS studies that adopt the framework. Two main ideas prevailed as to how agencies are applied. In some studies (e.g. Silva & Fulk 2012) agency is analysed by observing who are the initiators or IS change and who are those who have to comply with it, while other studies (e.g. Silva & Backhouse 1997; Smith et al. 2010) classify agency in terms of individuals or groups who have the same objectives.

This study adopted both approaches by identifying senior management in this case as one agency and IT personnel and users from both the merging entities as a constitutive agency of two agencies (one that is that of AlphaInsure's staff and another that is constitutive of BetaInsure's staff). The main reason for this was that even though the analysis of the episodic circuit may seem easier by having only two agencies, it would not have become clear to account as to how power struggles could be attributed to the unique merger context, that is scarcity of resources, disagreement over key decisions, uncertainly and disagreement on how to achieve goals (Mehta & Hirscheim 1997).

Another challenge that is not necessarily specific to the Clegg's (1989) theory is the grey area pertaining to what constitutes resistance and political activity. In order to adequately address this challenge, Mintzberg's (1985) conception of politics as an exercise of causal power outside the legitimate structures of organisation was in order to assist the researcher to distinguish between the two concepts. With regards to resistance, this report adopted a pragmatic approach of resistance, i.e.one that seeks to understand why people resist by considering different power actors and their possible reasons for resisting as resistance may not be just for the sake of resisting change but could be as a result of the proposed change

threatening the interests of individuals by limiting their autonomy, reducing their influence, or adding to their workload (Keen 1981).

The next stage of the analysis involved the analysis of the circuits of social integration and system integration. The analysis of the concepts that are constituted by the circuits of social integration (rules of meaning and membership) and system integration (techniques of production and discipline) presented some difficulty in terms of how they could be linked to data. For the purposes of this study and in relation to the research questions posed, the perspective that this research took was that rules of meaning and membership would be constituted of organisational norms, rules and values as they related to formal and informal structures of organisation (Backhouse et al. 2006; Silva & Fulk 2012). The focus of this circuit was aimed at analysing power that is embedded in these formal, informal and sometimes taken-for-granted norms, values and rules that constitute the institutional characteristics of an organisation. System integration, (i.e. techniques of production and discipline) though also somewhat vague was simpler to conceptualise in terms of how it could be adapted to this study and conceptual framework as it has proven to be adapted in a similar manner in other empirical studies that adopt the framework (e.g. Silva & Backhouse 1997). In this study the researcher did not have preconceived ideas in terms of what, if any changes in 'techniques of production and discipline' as introduced by episodic power change would 'empower' or 'disempower' agencies, but had an open mind. From the initial interviews however, it became clearer that business process change was the biggest disrupter of system integration.

According to Clegg's (1989) framework, changes in the circuits of social integration can 'facilitate' or 'restrict' innovation in the techniques of production and discipline. This link was deliberately disregarded in the adaptation of Clegg's (ibid) theory to the initial framework as it is not clear as to what this means. The motivation to deliberately discard the link there is no compelling reason from the researcher's reading that discarding the link between the two circuits would 'break' the circuit. Further, the researcher observed that there are prior studies that have adapted the framework without focusing on the link between the circuits of social and system integration (e.g. Backhouse et al. 2006). The researcher did however keep an open mind that a relation between the two might have emerged in the data gathered but there was no evidence of that. Clegg's (1989) theory also states that the two circuits (social and system integration) can be influenced by external exogenous

contingencies. In this case, these were analysed and observed to have been the competitive and regulatory environment that the organisation operated in. From the interpretation of the data, these exogenous contingencies seemed to have an influence on the circuit of system integration (i.e. business process change) and no impact or influence on the circuit of social integration.

The last part of the application of the circuits framework was in relation to the institutionalisation of an integrated system after a merger. Empirical studies that have adapted the circuits framework consider the stabilisation of changes in social and system integration as a successful translation of IS change into an Obligatory Passage Point, in other words the integrated information system becomes a conduit through which power must pass. The analysis of this translation in the context of this represents a complete cycle in how power flows according to Clegg's circuit theory. Clegg (1989) proposes that the process of translation involves four steps: problematization, interessment, enrolment and mobilization (Callon 1984). The analysis of this study showed that these steps could be accounted for in terms of the data collected and further the impact of stabilisation in the other circuits (i.e. social integration and system integration) was evidence of the achieved institutionalisation; thus demonstrating that Clegg's framework can be successfully used in examining institutionalisation of information systems from a power perspective.

6.3. Contribution

The contribution of this research can be broadly classified into two categories: theoretical and practical. A theoretical contribution refers to any value-added contribution on current thinking or improving what currently exists and does not necessarily mean provision of new theory (Whetten 1989). Practical contribution refers to the relevance of the research to industry and how the findings of the research can be of value to IS practitioners.

6.3.1. Theoretical contribution

The first theoretical contribution of this research is that it fills the gap in the literature by providing a thick description of power and politics in the context of the implementation and institutionalisation of an integrated IS function after a merger. In the review of the literature, it was identified that even though power and politics have been studied in various contexts in information systems research, there were very few studies that explicitly investigated power

and politics in a post-merger context. Considering that there is a lack of empirical studies that examine the power and politics in the integration of IS functions after a merger, this is a relevant contribution as this study provides a foundation for continued focus in this area.

Another theoretical contribution of this research is its adaptation of the Clegg's (1989) circuits of power framework to study power dynamics in the post-merger IS integration context. Clegg's (1989) theory does not make any direct connection between theoretical constructs and data, though it has been adapted in various contexts. Further, as far as the author is aware, there are no other studies that have used Clegg's (1989) theoretical framework in the post-merger IS integration context, by interpreting each of the circuits (i.e. episodic, social integration, system integration) in a manner that addresses the study's research question. It is therefore suggested that, from that perspective, the study constitutes a theoretical contribution and showcases the flexibility of the circuits of power framework to investigate intra-organisational and inter-organisational power dynamics.

This study further contributes to the existing body of work by focusing on the process of institutionalisation from a power perspective through examining specifically how institutionalisation can initially be imposed in the form of episodic change, and how it can be sustained by other stakeholders through the tightening of techniques of production and discipline and entrenching an existing organisational culture. The use of the circuit's framework as an analytical tool to investigate institutionalisation also provides a different theoretical lens through which to investigate institutionalisation, as researchers tend to adopt Institutional Theory and Actor Network Theory (Baptista, Newell & Currie 2010; DiMaggio & Powell 1993; Humes & Reinhard 2007).

6.3.2. Practical contribution

The overall practical contribution of this study is that it may assist practitioners to understand how the interplay between power and politics may result in desirable outcomes with regards to the implementation and institutionalisation of an integrated IS function of two merging firms. The emergent findings reveal specific power issues that information systems practitioners should be mindful of when integrating the IS function of merging entities.

The first area that practitioners may need to be cognisant of is the fact that power struggles, political activity and resistance manifest mainly because power actors may have conflicting

objectives and interests with regards to their desired outcomes. This is evident in this case, when considering the rationale and intended objectives for integrating the IS functions of AlphaInsure and BetaInsure. The senior management who advocated for the integration were at odds with IT personnel and business users as the organisational change that would be brought by the integration posed a threat on job security for them; thus by appreciating what the bases of power struggles are, power actors who intend to have an integrated IS function may be in a better position to strategically deploy resources at their disposal to counter or alleviate any power struggles or political activity that may undermine the intended objectives.

This research also highlights to IS practitioners the need to be cognisant that the integration of IS functions of firms that have different organisational norms, values and belief systems is likely to have alter power dynamics, such as change the managerial authority and decision making capacities of individuals after the merger. This change in the distribution of power is likely to influence how the integrated system are designed and implemented. Thus by paying attention to the potential change in the distribution of power, information systems practitioners would better be positioned to guard against the integrated system being implemented in a manner that intentionally disadvantages some groups over others.

Lastly this study can also assist IS practitioners implementing an integrated IS after a merger to understand how the strategic deployment of resources at the disposal agencies can facilitate the initial stages of institutionalisation. This study has shown how institutionalisation can be sustained by power actors with vested interests in how the integrated system legitimises their dispositional power. In considering the interests of groups, and identifying those who stand to benefit or lose from the institutionalisation of the new order, practitioners can have a better understanding of how to mobilize groups to accept and sustain the proposed institutional order.

6.4. Limitations of the Study

This research study contains some limitations. The first major limitation relates to the sensitive nature of the phenomena that were under investigation: i.e. power and politics. The challenge of for studying power stems from the organisational rational belief that power struggles and politics should not exist in organisations and as a result there is a negative connotation regarding the phenomena that are being examined (Silva 1997). In cases where such a study is to be conducted the researcher is required to develop a strong rapport and

trusted relationship with their respondents (Silva & Backhouse 2003). Even though the researcher had developed a trusting relationship with some respondents, however, due to the time period in which the study was to be conducted and limitations in terms of, it was not possible to establish and maintain such a relationship with all the respondents. The researcher's experience in this case was that it was easier to develop such a relationship with respondents who occupied more senior positions in the organisation than it was with more junior employees, some who seemed a bit suspicious of the research. As a result, the results ran a risk of being biased towards the views of more senior employees. The researcher alleviated this limitation by taking into account this power dynamic, and by using his own intuition and taking into account the contextual factors in mind. Further, the researcher reassured respondents that the study was conducted purely for academic purposes and that anonymity was guaranteed. The limitation with regards to the nature of phenomena under study was also somewhat moderated by the fact that the study was conducted after the IS integration on events that had already, therefore it was unlikely that respondents would be at risk.

The next limitation is that the data for this research was collected in the post-merger phase and after the IS integration had happened and as a result relies primarily on retrospective data largely based on individual's perceptions. The downside of self-reported accounts is that it may contain several sources of bias such as selective memory, exaggeration and attribution. Another downside of this approach is that the respondents that were interviewed were those who survived the merger, i.e. excluding those who would have resigned after the IS integration. The use of multiple sources of data in terms of interviewing various stakeholder groups and triangulating interview data with secondary data was a response to alleviate the implication of retrospective data.

Another limitation was that the study relied mainly on self-reported accounts of individuals as data was collected primarily through semi-structured interviews. Self-reported data is likely to be compromised by social desirability bias from the responses that are being elicited from the respondents. In this case for an example, it would be highly unlikely for respondents to openly admit to being involved in political activity. Similar to the previous limitation, this limitation was also alleviated through the use of multiple sources of data by interviewing different types of groups and asking them to share what they believed were the experiences of

others. This approach assisted the researcher to have a more balances view of how the events unfolded.

6.5. Suggestions for Further Research

The first suggestion for further research relates to what was earlier identified as a limitation in this study, i.e. the use of data that was primarily collected in the post-merger phase. The research opportunity this presents is for a longitudinal study that can research power in the merger context by collecting data about power dynamics in the all the phases of the merger, i.e. the pre-merger phase, the integration phase and the post-merger phase using the circuits framework. Such a study can offer the opportunity of the analysis of the three circuits at each merger phase and may offer richer insights in terms of the transformation of power by comparing the analysis of findings from each of the stages.

There also exists an opportunity for a further research in the form of a comparative study on power dynamics of different merger and IS integration type combinations. It is probable that power differentials between the two merging firms under these different conditions may yield different results in terms of what power struggles may emerge (Mehta & Hirschheim 2004). A comparative study of power struggles in these different conditions can assist in explaining why certain power struggles in the context of the integration of IS functions are likely to happen under particular merger and IS integration type conditions.

Further research that can be conducted in this context could also look at what alternative theories that can be used to supplement areas where the circuits framework is vague in terms of relating theoretical concepts to data, particularly around the circuits of social integration and how the circuits of social integration and system integration relate. Potential theories that researchers could consider for this purpose are Schein's (1984) levels of culture model and Gidden's (1984) theory of structuration.

APPENDIX A – Interview Questions

Background

1. Describe your involvement/role in the integration project
2. What was the idea/motivation behind integrating information systems for this particular project after the merger?

Episodic Circuit

3. Who were the stakeholders? Explain to me the various stakeholders and what their roles were?
4. How would you describe the relationships between managers and their subordinates from both the merging entities with regards to the integration project?
5. What were the outcomes/results that you personally sought to see from the project?
6. What would you say the outcomes/results that were sought by other stakeholders were?
7. What power struggles (if any) do you think emerged as a result of different stakeholders seeking/having different expectations/outcomes out of the whole project?
8. Would you say there was any form of resistance towards the project? If so, can you please elaborate
9. If there was any resistance, how did it affect the organisation?

Circuit of Social Integration

I would now like us to focus on organisational/corporate culture, specifically the norms, shared values that are in the organisation.

10. How would you say corporate culture has been before the merger and after the merger?
11. What factors outside the realm of the organisation would you say influence the corporate culture?
12. How did these cultural differences between these merging entities manifest themselves during the integration project?
13. What impact did the integrated system have on the power dynamics of the organisation?

Circuit of System Integration

Now let us focus on the way of working, i.e. the day-to-day functioning of department, particularly with regards to issues related to organisation structure and business processes.

14. How would you say the AlphaInsures's business processes compared with that of BetaInsure's? Were there similarities/differences?

15. How did differences with regard to processes and structure emerge as contentious during the integration?
16. Did the integration result in change of organisational structure and processes? If not why? If so How?
17. How did the changes that were made in the integrated system change the power dynamics?

Integrated Information System as an Obligatory Passage Point

18. Would you say the system reflects the intended objectives of those that introduced it in terms of how it is currently used?
19. Once the integration was complete would you say there was any resistance?
20. Please reflect on how the integration was perceived in the beginning and how those perceptions have changed over time.

Conclusion *Is there any point discussed previously that you would like to elaborate further on or any other thing you would like to mention?*

APPENDIX B – List of Participants

Participant Pseudonym	Position
Respondent A	Specialist IT Head (former AlphaInsure)
Respondent B	IT Manager (former AlphaInsure)
Respondent C	Chief Operating Officer, AlphaBeta Insurance Holdings
Respondent D	Technical Lead (former BetaInsure)
Respondent E	Segment Head - Retail (AlphaInsure Holdings)
Respondent F	Call Centre Agent (former BetaInsure)

APPENDIX C – List of Secondary Data Used

- Staff updates about merger, obtained from AlphaBeta Holdings intranet website
- CEO's monthly email communique, obtained from AlphaBeta Holdings intranet website
- AlphaBeta Holdings Press Release on the Amalgamation of licences of AlphaInsure and BetaInsure, obtained from AlphaBeta Holdings intranet website
- News reports about AlphaInsure & BetaInsure obtained from various online news agencies
- Organisational chart of AlphaInsure's IT division obtained from AlphaBeta Holdings intranet website
- Quarterly Feedback Presentation of AlphaBeta Holdings, obtained from, obtained from AlphaBeta Holdings intranet website

APPENDIX D – Table of Initial Codes

MAIN THEME	SUBTHEMES	LINK TO DATA	CODES/SUB CODES
THEME 1: Episodic Power Relations	Agency	Who is A making B do something that they would typically not do. Identify the most powerful stakeholders, in terms of access to resources.	EPI_AGENCY
	Outcomes	What are the objectives of A and B.? How are they similar or how are they different or how do they come into conflict?	EPI_OUTCOME
	Social Relations	How are the social relations between A and B and how are they changing over time.	EPI_SOC_REL
	Exercise of Power	How do various agencies exercise power? What standing conditions (resources) do agencies have at their disposal in order to exercise power? How do agencies deploy these resources in order to secure their desired outcomes?	EPI_EXERCISE EPI_STAND
	Power struggles	What power struggles emerge as A tries to get B to do what he wants.	EPI_PS
	Resistance	Identify if there is any form of resistance. Why is there resistance? How was resistance dealt with/countered?	• EPI_RES • EPI_RES_COUNTER
	Politics	Political activity should be identified to the use of illegitimate power or structures to achieve desired means	EPI_POL
THEME 2: Exogenous environmental contingencies	N/A	What external contingencies distant to A and B caused A to do what he wants to do? How do these exogenous environmental contingencies affect the circuits of social and system integration?	EXX • EXX_SOC • EXX_SYS
THEME 3: Social Integration	Rules, Norm, Values	What rules, norms and values guided (written or unwritten) legitimation to power and how will these be destabilised or changed after the integration?	SOC_RULES_NORMS_VALUE
THEME 4: System Integration	Techniques of Production and Discipline	How is the integrated system going to affect power, structure and governance? How have these facilitated or restricted the way agencies do their work and how have these been interpreted by agencies?	SYS_INT • SYS_INT_TEC_PRD • SYS_INT_TEC_DISC
THEME 5: Institutionalisation	Successful translation of IS into an OPP in terms of A getting what A wants	What did A do in order for B to get to do what he wants? (refer to Callon's (1986) steps of translation: Problematization, interessment, enrolment and mobilization)	INTS_TRANS • INST_PROBLEM • INST_INTER • INST_ENROL • INST_MOBIL
	Resistance to system after its implementation	Has there been some resistance to the institutionalised system. How was resistance countered?	INST_RES INST_RES_COUNTER

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