

# Exploring Knowledge Sharing in the Department of Defense

Melissa Ann Connell, DBA

## Abstract

A phenomenological study using **Nonaka and Takeuchi's socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization (SECI) model** explored the organized, continual method of tacit-to-explicit knowledge theory for organizational knowledge creation. Twenty participants shared their lived experiences in semistructured interviews. Ten primary themes emerged, with results indicating the foundation for supporting the knowledge sharing process.

## Problem

A significant aspect of knowledge management is **knowledge sharing**; however, leaders, managers, and employees do not completely understand the knowledge sharing process between individuals and within the social structure of teams (Blankenship & Ruona, 2009; Kokavcova & Mala, 2009).

The problem is that organizations that do not implement knowledge management strategies will not remain competitive in the 21st century (Gregory-Mina, 2010), and transferring knowledge can be a difficult process (Calo, 2008).

## Purpose

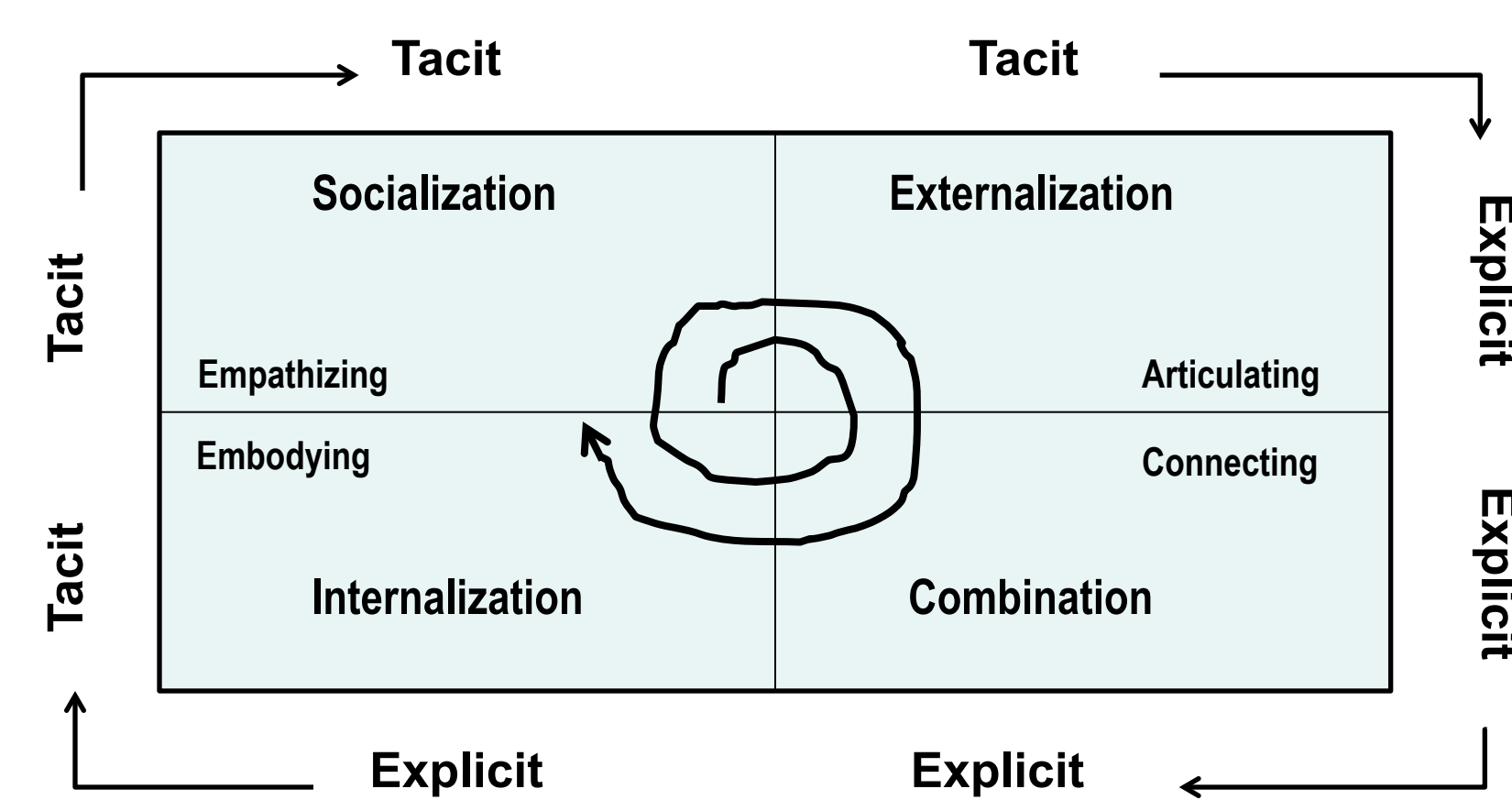
The purpose of this qualitative, **phenomenological research study** was to acquire new knowledge by exploring the lived experiences of employees within the contracting division at a Department of Defense organization and to provide management with a better understanding of the knowledge sharing process.

## Relevant Literature

### Conceptual Framework

•**Nonaka and Takeuchi's SECI model** (1995), which is a spiral process that blends tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge to form four distinct knowledge designs.

The SECI model (Nonaka and Takeuchi)



### Other contributing authors include:

- Bass, B. M. (2003).
- Drucker, P. F. (1999, Winter).
- Goleman, D. (2001).
- Kokavcova, D., & Mala, D. (2009).
- Nonaka, I., & Takeuchi, H. (1995)
- Pink, D. (2009).

## Research Questions

**Central research question.** What are the issues, claims, and concerns behind the employees' perceptions regarding knowledge sharing within the contracting division at a Department of Defense organization?

**RQ1.** How do you define knowledge management?

**RQ2.** What factors contribute to and support knowledge management in the organization?

**RQ3.** What benefits are derived from employing knowledge management principles in the organization?

**RQ4.** What are the barriers of implementing knowledge management in the organization?

## Procedures

Prior to this study, a **pilot survey** was administered to 3 participants to ensure the integrity of the study.

**Purposive sampling** of participants occurred based on their level of contracting experience and availability to participate in the interview process. The **snowball sampling** technique was used for recruiting the 20 participants.

Data were collected through **personal, semi-structured interviews**. Participants were recorded using the Echo Smartpen. **Seventeen interview questions** were proposed to participants after in-depth analysis was conducted by the researcher and approved by Walden instructors.

## Data Analysis

Data obtained from personal interviews consisted of using a three-step coding system (Goulding & Saren, 2010).

To **help improve the accuracy, credibility, and validity** of the full study, a pilot study was conducted with 3 participants.

**HyperRESEARCH** qualitative software was used to code and connect themes.

## Findings

**10 major themes** emerged regarding employees' perception of knowledge sharing within the contracting division at a Department of Defense organization.

- Organizational Culture
- Trust
- Management Support and Leadership Styles
- Training and Development
- Rewards and Incentives
- Motivation
- Personal Relationships
- Attitudes, Individual Perception, and Personality
- Workload
- Knowledge Transfer

## Limitations

**2 limitations** to the study included:

- **Scheduling Interviews** - Interviews were conducted onsite during off-duty hours, which included before or after official work hours as well as during lunch and official breaks.
- Learning how to use and extract data from the qualitative research software, **HyperRESEARCH**.

## Conclusions

**Important changes need to occur** to facilitate, cultivate, and enhance the knowledge sharing process.

- The foundation for supporting the knowledge sharing process consist of implementing a **culture of openness and willingness to share on all levels**.
- Focusing on the **culture of the organization** along with implementing levels of **trust** are essential.

Implementing knowledge sharing processes can be powerful tools for organizations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## Social Change Implications

The implications for social change are that employers may promote knowledge management principles to encourage a more competent, successful, and effective work and business environments.