

**Functional Collusion in a UK Non Governmental
Organisation: Processes of Shame and Exclusion from the
Perspective of an Organisational Development Practitioner**

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Abstract

Key words: Collusion, habitus, shame, groups, organisational development.

Key authors: N. Elias, G.H. Mead, P. Bourdieu, I. Goffman, G. Simmel, I. Burkitt, A. Damasio, J. Dewey, M. Foucault, H. Arendt, R. Stacey, C. Mowles.

This thesis explores the emergence of functional collusion in groups and communities. Collusion is often taken up as synonymous with conspiracy, as a negative aspect of people seeking to get an advantage by nefarious means. In contrast, the thesis points to how a form of collusion might have a function for supporting people in their ongoing relating and in doing so suggests that there are two important factors in functional collusion. The first is that contextual history is key to understanding how, without planning or discussion, collusion emerges and is maintained in groups and communities. The second is that an absence of discussion is key because bringing collusive patterns of relating into our conversations disables their continuation. This thesis argues that collusion arises as people avoid the discomfort of emotions such as shame as well as maintaining familiar patterns of power relating. As collusive patterns of relating tend to emerge undiscussed between people, the thesis suggests that deciding whether to uncover and discuss them is a matter of contextual practical judgement or phronesis as it will inevitably require the navigation of ethical dilemmas which the author argues cannot be solved simply through the application of universal rules. This thesis offers a challenge to the way people working as organisational development practitioners think about their practice, especially those working in the not-for-profit sector.

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Introduction

This thesis is the culmination of the three years I spent on the Doctor of Management Programme (DMan) at the University of Hertfordshire. As a research programme the DMan has emerged from the work of a group of researchers at the Business School who have developed a multidisciplinary theory to understand organisations. Within the theory of complex responsive processes of relating these scholars argue that the future is fundamentally unknowable and emerges from the interaction of many people in local situations (Stacey, 2007, pp259-261). As another aspect of this theory these authors also claim that knowledge emerges unpredictably from the patterning of conscious and self-conscious human bodies relating with each other through language and discourse understood as social processes. The way of working on the DMan programme takes these ideas seriously and therefore the process of research is understood as an unpredictable and emergent inquiry that is both individual (in the sense that the work is that of the individual researcher) and social at the same time because the work involves being reflexive about one's relationships with others. The social nature of inquiry is taken up through working with a community of researchers and a smaller learning set (which includes one's supervisor), sharing one's work and inviting responses from others throughout the programme. The research involves writing numerous iterations of each project as one's work progresses and emerges from one's involvement in the social processes that go on in one's workplace. In my case this has involved me exploring my practice as an employee facilitator in an international NGO.

As a consequence of the work emerging in this way the structure of this thesis differs from that of the more common format for a professional doctorate. As the reader moves on from this introduction and into the main body of the thesis they will encounter a series of four projects, each with different narratives at their heart drawn from my work. Each project represents an exploration of those narratives. The movement of my thinking is demonstrated over all four projects as I have reflexively responded to my research in terms of changes to my practice. To be able to see my movement of thought over time, the projects that form the main body of this thesis remain unchanged from the time they were completed. In the final synopsis at the end of this thesis I review the four projects (which is intended to give a further reflexive

turn on my research), and I go on to set out my arguments, my contributions to knowledge and practice, and an exploration of method and ethics.

At the time when I started the DMan programme I was working in an international non-governmental organisation (NGO) based in the UK and the narratives that I have used as data have been drawn from my work in that organisation. I started out on my research thinking about how organisational change comes about but became increasingly interested in why some relationships and processes seemed to stay stubbornly the same. In this thesis I will be discussing how people interact in everyday circumstances and describing collusive processes, which often remain hidden or that go unnoticed, that represent the maintenance and continuity of social relating. The well-known Hans Christian Andersen story of the Emperor's New Clothes (Andersen, 2018) is an example of the kind of phenomenon that I have been interested in. What is happening for the Emperor to think, and for people to agree, that he is fully clothed when in fact it is clear that he is completely naked? I think it is telling that in the final paragraph of the story we are told that even though the Emperor thought to himself that he might be naked, he carried on with his procession as if nothing was wrong. I interpret the Emperor carrying on as if he is still fully clothed as an attempt to avoid the shame that would likely ensue if he didn't do so.

This story represents an allegorical example of what I have noticed going on in organisations and have called processes of functional collusion which people engage in to avoid uncomfortable emotions such as shame. However, as a way of understanding how global patterns of relating emerge from local interaction, I am proposing there are no rogues deliberately setting out to fool everyone, as in the story of the Emperor. Instead, I am arguing that we all participate in the maintenance of patterns of relating that themselves emerge, unbidden and undiscussed, from ongoing relating between interdependent people. In the story of the Emperor I had previously understood it to be about how foolhardy the Emperor was to be taken in by the rogues. However, I now understand it as an example of how assumptions can arise over time in a group or community with which people then feel the need to collude to be seen as competent. It is important to the story that it took a child to point out that the Emperor was naked. We all find this believable because we understand that children often lack the understanding of the tacit social rules that govern how we

respond to each other. From the perspective of Bourdieu (1991, pp12-13), the child has yet to be formed by the habitus that involves taking up the silent traditions that have emerged in the history of that community. Through my research the idea of habitus has had a considerable influence on my thinking.

To begin the reflexive process of understanding how I have come to think the way I do, project one is intended as an exploration of how my intellectual history has unfolded and so the narratives in that project are drawn from my work history before I commenced the DMan. In project one I discuss how I learned to take for granted assumptions about power and control mostly based on systems thinking and formative teleology, as explained by Stacey et al. (2000). I learned what to think through my interactions with others as my practice developed, as an immigration officer in my early career, then as a manager and latterly as an organisational development (OD) practitioner. At the end of project one the history of how my thinking had developed was becoming apparent to me. I was also being challenged by ideas related to the perspective of complex responsive processes of relating with particular attention to the paradox entailed in how we are individually formed by our social experience as we form others. The idea that my identity is both individual and social at the same time challenged my thinking of myself as somehow independent of my social experience. I moved from an interest in power and control, to being interested in how undiscussed traditions seem to arise in groups and communities.

In project two I go on to explore my practice as a facilitator because I was interested in how the assumptions I described in project one were at play in my practice. Through my research in project two I describe how I facilitated a strategy away day involving familiar activities to encourage participation and discussion. Reflecting on that experience I realised that aspects of facilitative processes could be seen as infantilising as the participants looked to me as the facilitator to tell them what to do. My unwitting involvement made me think about how collusion, seen as a social process, may emerge in groups in the avoidance of shame. As I moved into project three I went through a job interview process at work and having taken up the idea of collusion, I went on to explore what might be at play in job interviews and what function the collusion I had been discussing may have. Finally, in project four I explore what it might mean for people if they do not collude with the prevailing

patterns of relating, leading to an understanding of reflexive practical judgement as a form of practice. Aristotle's phronesis, (practical judgement) is the contextual and moral judgement making in which we understand the history of our practice and the general rules that pertain to a situation but are not necessarily limited by them. In this sense practice is understood as an ongoing reflexive process that is paradoxically both individual and social at the same time. Coming from the pragmatist tradition, Dewey (1916) emphasises practical judgment as being characterized by our thinking coming to bear on things to do or to be done in a given situation and in making such judgements paying attention to the means we employ in striving for our desired ends. Other DMan graduates have dealt extensively with issues of power relating (Solso, 2017; Rogers, 2013) and whilst I recognise the maintenance of patterns of power in the emergence of collusion, I have emphasised and explored the emotional processes involved, especially shame, as it has a particular relevance to my experience.

I have taken a multidisciplinary approach to developing my critique and to give examples of some of the literature I discuss; I have taken up the work of authors on complex responsive processes such as Ralph Stacey, Doug Griffin and Chris Mowles; concepts of a social self from George Herbert Mead and Norbert Elias; the sociological ideas of Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault; understanding emotions from the work of Antonio Damasio; and emotion as social process from Ian Burkitt. As I have said, this thesis has emerged from my reflexive response to my practice over four projects in which I take up literature to help me to understand my experience. As a consequence, there is not a literature review in any one section or chapter. Instead I will relate my arguments to relevant literature throughout the thesis.

The history of my practice has been that of an organisational development practitioner and, as this thesis is an exploration of my practice, it represents a contribution to both the knowledge and practice of the community of people working in organisational development in UK NGOs. This is important because my discussion of collusion challenges traditional ideas about organisational development and change. In this thesis I recognise moves towards understanding the importance of narrative and dialogue by writers on contemporary organisational development (OD) such as Bushe and Marshak (2009), whilst taking issue with their systemic and individualistic

assumptions as well as those of other writers on organisational development such as Senge (1990) and Schon (1983).

Project One: An exploration of power, control and authority at work

Introduction

At the time of embarking on this Dman programme I was working for a large international aid charity. This involved directly supporting the main fundraising department, through conversations with the departmental director as well as other senior managers with the aim of helping them to decide how they can improve the effectiveness of their work and the work of their teams. Most of the time this involved taking a coaching approach to encourage them to find solutions for themselves and occasionally it involved me offering potential solutions and sometimes directly offering help to bring about desired improvements or changes. In addition to this I had corporate responsibility for developing management and leadership competence across the organisation that operated across the world in three geographic areas which are Latin and Central America, Asia and the Middle East, and Africa. In my career I have previously been a manager in the UK public sector and, for a short time, an independent consultant. I have also completed a Masters degree in people and organisational development that expanded and embedded how I have come to think about organisations and management.

Through that Masters programme I became interested in power and control in organisations especially in relation to my own response to authority. I explored this through a first person subjective research inquiry into my experience at work and explored how my upbringing and early experiences may have influenced my expectations of managers and leaders at work. When I was young, around two years old, my mother and father divorced having had a violent relationship. My mother then met my stepfather who was a heavy drinker and rarely at home. My main stable father figure was my grandfather who died when I was around 11 years old. In my exploration on that Masters programme I concluded that this lack of a nurturing father figure led me to unconsciously seek nurturing paternal relationships from men in authority at work. In that research work I also came to a writing style and a way of thinking that was subjective and I have struggled to change that style and reach for a

balance between the subjective and objective stance that has been asked of me from my supervisors on this DMan programme.

Through my experiences I have formed assumptions about management and leadership that have informed my approach to my practice at work. These assumptions include taken for granted ideas about power and control as well as systems thinking and changeable mental models. In this paper I will explain more about how I came to believe those things and how they are being challenged through the critique that comes from the ideas within complex responsive processes of relating with which I have come into contact both when studying for a Masters as well as within my study in this DMan programme.

Experience of being managed and becoming a manager

At the age of twenty-one I got my first real job as an immigration officer at Heathrow Airport where I worked for four years. How I carried out my work was set out by many processes and policies that gave instruction on how to carry out the duties of an immigration officer. There was little requirement for independent thinking which led to most of us working there doing just what was required. Sickness rates were high and stories of shirking were plentiful. One colleague became famed for wandering around with a pink file (these files were used to hold information relating to immigration cases under review and investigation) under his arm looking busy to avoid further work. Regardless of whether or not this was true, it indicates the sort of stories that formed a work environment whereby most of us put a lot of energy in getting one over the managers to whom the task fell to ensure the immigration control ran smoothly. I can see that my assumption here is that it was the manager's job to ensure the smooth running of the immigration control. That was how it seemed. This meant that as immigration officers we did not perceive ourselves as responsible for it in the same way. F. W. Taylor is often quoted as the forefather of how we currently think about modern management. Taylor was writing at a time of industrial revolution when there were big changes in understanding the natural sciences. In setting out his principles of scientific management (1911) he proposed a scientific method of management. In taking up a scientific method and applying it to work situations he

suggested that working men, through lack of education or insufficient mental capacity, were not able to understand how best to do their work and needed guidance and oversight from their managers. The manager's role was to examine individual tasks in detail and specify the skills and actions required to carry out those tasks to standardise the most efficient and effective way of doing them. It is testament to the popularity of Taylor's ideas and their taken for granted nature that this expectation also existed in the British public sector in the 1990s. Taylor firmly places the authority to make decisions in the hands of the manager. This then creates the expectation that when such decisions have been made, workers will follow the manager's instructions.

After four years in London I took an opportunity to transfer to Newcastle Airport. The work environment was still characterised by the same processes and policies I had come to know at Heathrow Airport and there was an attitude amongst immigration officers of getting one over the management. The managers there seemed to take one of two approaches, either they attempted to employ increasingly complicated ways of catching the immigration officers shirking, a phenomenon that Taylor (1911) called 'soldiering', which usually resulted in immigration officers finding increasingly complicated ways of avoiding them or undermining their efforts. Alternatively, some managers took the route of leaving the immigration officers to it and attended the office very infrequently.

I think we would have all agreed at the time that it was a manager's job to manage us as the staff members but the dynamics of how we related to each other created a kind of cat and mouse game and a feeling that there was an 'us' as the workers and a 'them' as the managers. The differences in power and authority in this situation can be seen to have created dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. To be a manager excludes one from being a worker. Being a worker excludes one from being a manager.

I have written the last two paragraphs to introduce some of my early experiences of being managed and to illustrate how taken for granted the role of manager and the manager's responsibility to exercise authority was and how I took up from that experience the idea that it was the managers role to oversee the work of staff and to

ensure that things run smoothly. I have also expressed how that role was often problematic as I and the people I worked with sought to avoid oversight. I took these ideas of what it was to be managed into my first experiences of management. This led me to feel a sense of accountability for the actions of those I was asked to manage whilst all the while feeling that I had little control or authority over what they did.

Over time I was promoted to a senior role as a regional manager in the immigration department. During my time in that job two major incidents occurred in which I was involved. These two incidents are indicative of how ideas of disciplinary power (Stacey, 2012, pp66-78), control and authority, leading managers to feel the need to be in charge, were taken for granted and embedded in the policies and processes, to which, I and others were expected to adhere.

Senior managers in the immigration department had taken up ideas of incident management from the police. This involved the separation of layers of management into gold, silver and bronze. The gold level was formed from senior managers and those working at this level were expected to form strategy which would then be operationally planned and managed by the managers at the silver level, after which, the bronze layer of people would carry out the work. This separation was to be strictly adhered to and instructions from gold, silver and bronze passed down through this structure were to be followed without question. It is easy to see how the ideas of Taylor (1911) are embedded into this structure with the thinking and strategizing being done at senior levels only and the implementation of those strategies being carried out by people who theoretically had little or no say in how it should be done.

One morning, I was on my way to work in Manchester Airport when I got a call on my mobile phone. It was someone from Lancashire police. There had been an incident in Morecambe Bay and a number of Chinese people had drowned. I was asked to join the gold command team as a representative of the immigration department. I was asked because all of the other officers senior to me were together the night before having a residential meeting and they were un-contactable that morning. I went immediately to Lancashire Police Headquarters and spent the next three days working closely with the Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) who was in overall command of the incident and other senior officers from Customs and the Coastguard as the events

unfolded. I attended press briefings and acted as a go between for the ACC and the immigration department.

The immigration department had recently invested in an innovative piece of technology that could identify asylum seekers from their fingerprints in real time. The police were aware of this equipment and asked if I would authorise its use to help identify the bodies of those that had died. The equipment was routinely used to identify immigration offenders in police stations when they were suspected of having given false details of their identity after they were arrested in the hope of avoiding deportation. The action requested by the police was against departmental policy because the machines were not supposed to be used on dead bodies.

I remember a number of conversations that took place between me and the senior police officers as well as with other of my staff members both on the phone and in person. On reflection, my decision-making did not follow from a separation of the strategic and the operational as laid out in the gold, silver, bronze prescription. Rather, it emerged from a growing understanding of what seemed like the right thing to do at the time given the conversations I was having. Through these conversations I recognised the importance of the situation and given that I could not seek guidance from my senior officers as they were still out of contact, I over rode the policy and authorised the use of the equipment. Sometime after the incident I was challenged on this decision and threatened with disciplinary action as the machines had to be decommissioned. I remember feeling a mixture of fear, anger and frustration during the time that I faced that threat (which never came to be acted upon).

As events unfolded over the three days that I was involved in the incident I took numerous calls from senior managers in the immigration department who wanted to discuss my decision-making. It felt to me that they were nervous of having a relatively junior and inexperienced manager involved at the gold command level as gold command work would normally be carried out at director level and I was two levels below that in the hierarchy. This narrative points to how I, and those around me, were responding to each other as we felt responsible for each other and the outcomes that were unfolding. As a result of my own expectations of the managers

above me taking responsibility for looking after me, I felt let down by those managers and vulnerable without their support.

Stacey (2007, pp36-38) points to how ideas of Tayloristic scientific management identify only the manager as being able to exercise freedom of choice in designing the rules that members of the organisation are to follow. In this case although I was a manager, according to policy, I did not have the authority to change the rules for the use of the fingerprint equipment and therefore I was the member of the organisation who was expected to follow the rules. I found myself in the position of being both a manager and a member of staff at the same time. Such was the nature of these taken for granted ideas of scientific management in my work environment I found myself in a contradictory position of either following the departmental rules or following the request of the police gold commander. As the police gold commander was outside of the immigration department she did not feel bound by its departmental policies on the use of equipment and she was purely interested in how to further the objective of identifying the dead bodies.

This then makes me wonder who, if anyone, was actually in charge of this situation. At one point during this incident I was riding in a police car with the ACC. We were on the way to a press conference and she was on the telephone to the press office of the immigration department, who were refusing to allow me or anyone else from the immigration department to appear with her in front of the media. Whilst it was not explained to me why they were refusing to allow anyone to appear I assumed that it was better to say nothing than to risk the uncertainty of a live press conference in such difficult circumstances. I remember clearly that the ACC used the phrase that she felt 'very lonely' as the only person going in front of the media. This phrase struck me at the time and I have often thought about it since. Whilst I recognise that her use of this phrase was a plea to the press office for support, I also think it is indicative of the burden of personal responsibility she was feeling. The gold, silver, bronze process is designed to give the illusion that gold officers are in control and are able to manage successful outcomes in such incidents. As a senior manager she seemed to also place this expectation upon herself with the resulting feelings of being exposed and vulnerable. This seems similar to the feelings of vulnerability that I felt in response to what I perceived as a lack of support from my senior managers.

The expectation of order and control within the command structure was not how I, or others, experienced the unfolding events during that incident. In fact, there was more a sense for me that we were muddling through, making judgements together as we went along, with the information we had available. This leads me to wonder if in fact anyone was in charge or maybe no one and everyone at the same time was responsible for what was happening as we interacted.

The second major incident was also managed through the gold, silver and bronze command structure. Even though this incident did not directly involve police commanders, at the time of the incident, the immigration department had fully adopted police methods of managing critical incidents. I was working in my office in Manchester when I received a call from my boss. A significant problem had arisen for our department in that a large number of foreign national prisoners had been released from prison without subsequently being deported, even though part of their court sentence was that they be deported at the end of their sentence. The national press had become aware of this and there was a lot of pressure being put on Ministers who were now putting pressure on the immigration department.

I was asked to put together and manage a national team to actively seek those that had been released and to apprehend them for their deportation to proceed. I contacted colleagues around the country and arranged for teams to begin to search for these foreign national prisoners. Over the coming days and weeks the pressure to apprehend these people increased as it became apparent that a large number of them had not stayed in the addresses they had given. The national press was increasing pressure on the Ministers because it had become known that a number of these foreign national prisoners who had been released had committed serious crimes such as murder and rape.

I was managing a twenty-four-hour operation looking for these ex-offenders and I was having daily phone meetings with colleagues around the country. All of us were feeling a lot of pressure and these daily phone meetings became increasingly tense as we kept failing to find these prisoners. On one call I remember a growing complaint amongst my colleagues that senior managers were making unreasonable demands on

them and that the expectations of apprehending the ex-offenders was impossible. I remember reflecting with them that their feelings of frustration, and feeling under pressure, were understandable and that I recognized that senior managers were also under considerable pressure, perhaps even more than those of us further down the chain given their proximity to Ministers. There was a great demand for information from senior managers and Ministers relating to which offenders had been apprehended and we were attempting to provide this information in a very dynamic situation in which the information was often partial or sometimes just wrong. Spreadsheets of this information were being relayed hourly between the teams that I was managing and others until they reached the Minister. The Minister and senior managers were then using this information to decide how we should proceed and inform Parliament and the press.

Eventually the situation ended when the Minister mistakenly gave false information in the House of Commons. This left the Minister in a very difficult position. It seemed that either he deliberately gave false information to Parliament, in which case he was a liar, or he made a mistake and was not in control of his department and therefore incompetent. It is this notion of control by the Minister that everyone seemed to take for granted. In fact, in other situations where I have seen Ministers in similar circumstances, any attempt from them to explain their lack of control is deemed as being dishonourable or attempting to pass the buck. It seems then that there was no opportunity to discuss what was really going on in our attempts to apply control to outcomes in this situation. As a consequence, I question whether it is the expectations that emanate from our ways of thinking about authority and control that might be faulty, rather than individuals being to blame for events playing out differently to how they had been planned.

Outside of these incidents I was also taking for granted this notion of managerial control in that as a team leader I invested a great deal of time and effort into trying to develop a strong performing team. This consisted of a number of facilitated team-building events and subsequent one to one meetings. Although the events themselves seemed to be successful I was frustrated that the behaviour of my direct reports did not change. They often argued openly about the performance of their respective units and would try to influence me to endorse their own point of view. Within my one to

one meetings with them I tried regularly but unsuccessfully to persuade them to talk together privately about agreeing a way forward.

The models that I was being introduced to about leadership and management all seemed to put me in the position of power and choice as the manager and leader, where I should have been able to choose my actions and predict the outcomes and the actions of others. However, through my experience I was consistently finding that not to be the case. As I took such notions of power and choice for granted I assumed that my failure to exercise control was down to how I was performing as a manager rather than the models being faulty in any way. A combination of my acceptance of these notions of control, and my upbringing, gave me the idea that, as a man I must be tough and capable. As a consequence, I felt a great shame about what I considered my underperformance and I started to look for a different job.

Becoming an organisational development practitioner

A short time after these incidents I got a new job as an internal change consultant in the same department. I struggled with the new work. I was expected to develop relationships with business colleagues and to support change initiatives across the department. I started to look at how I might learn more and came across an MSc programme in People and Organisational Development being run at Roffey Park that offered a Masters course of study. Embedded within the foundations of the MSc, and in Organisational Development as a practice are biological and therapeutic ideas of humanistic psychology (Miettinen, 2000). I experienced the process of studying for the MSc as being quite deeply therapeutic. It gave me sense of understanding of what I had been through in my life. Through my research in the MSc I was connecting patterns of relating emanating from my early experiences as a child to how I was relating to people at work, especially male authority figures. I started to identify myself as an OD practitioner and took on, with little critique, the humanistic and systems principles that are embedded in how OD has developed.

Warner Burke (1994) suggests that OD developed from three major innovations. These are T-groups or sensitivity training, Sociotechnical systems and survey

feedback. T-groups, the (T stands for training), were developed by Kurt Lewin in 1946. When working with groups, Lewin, would, with his trainer colleagues, discuss individual and group performance afterwards. An individual trainee asked to sit in on these discussions and Lewin was struck by the extra insight and learning this provided. Discussions of group process between trainers and trainees was extended to all and the T-group was born. The aim then in T-groups was to develop the individual trainee's self-awareness and by doing so develop their personal effectiveness. This idea of developing personal self-awareness can be seen in a number of writers' work since T-groups were developed: from Steven Covey (2004), with his seven habits of personal effectiveness including its emphasis on developing a principle centred self, to Peter Senge's (1990) work on learning organisations with his similar idea of personal mastery. They all take a humanistic, behavioural and individualistic approach to developing people. Lewin's personal history is interesting. Lewin, living as a Jew in Germany through the early 1900s, was clearly influenced by his social position. While at the University of Munich, Lewin became involved in the socialist movement with a particular interest in the combating of anti-Semitism, the democratization of German institutions, and the need to improve the position of women. Throughout the 1940s Lewin was in demand as a speaker on minority issues (Smith, 2001). It is possible then that Lewin's motivation in trying to increase people's awareness of their impact on others came from his background as a member of an oppressed minority in the early to mid 1900s, which formed in him a deeply democratic and humanistic view of the world.

The idea of sociotechnical systems was developed at the Tavistock Institute by Trist and Bamforth, (Warner Burke, 2006) and refers to the idea that organisations are both technical systems in that they deliver a product or service through the application of physical technology and that they are social systems in that they employ people to apply these technologies. Both the social and technical systems are subsystems of the whole organisation and the interaction between them needs to be considered in any change effort. I note here the taken for granted position on the existence of human systems upon which one can act to enact planned change. Trist and Bamforth (1951) developed their ideas through working with coalminers in South Yorkshire in 1949. They discovered that after the introduction of new technologies, previously existing social groups or teams were disbanded and workers were asked to work different

shifts. Productivity then fell despite the introduction of the new technology. The workers, with the support of their unions, asked to reorganise their work to reintroduce their previous team working whilst still integrating the new technology. This was done and productivity was then increased. It is useful to understand the history of Trist and Bamforth as individuals. Ken Bamforth was a post-graduate fellow at the Tavistock Institute but had previously been a coal miner and trade unionist. Eric Trist, a founder of the Tavistock Institute, had a history of critically analysing deskilling and managerial control. Clearly Trist and Bamforth would have a particular social viewpoint in their work and because of the union background of Bamforth would be more likely to privilege the individual workers' needs.

Survey feedback (Likert, 1932) was a method of intervention developed by Rensis Likert at the Institute of Michigan building on the work of Kurt Lewin. The basic premise is that a survey of staff on organisational issues is conducted and the results are shared systematically throughout the organisation from the top down. Within this methodology, practitioners will attempt to take a position either outside of the organisation and observing behaviour or by engaging with the organisation and accepting that they will impact on the results personally. Within survey feedback then, the practitioner takes the position of both observer and participant. We can see here the impact of systems thinking with the practitioner being expected to be able to choose whether they are inside or outside of the system. The use of survey feedback in organisations can also be seen as an attempt to democratize the decision-making processes.

We can see then how the people behind these developments, with their personal histories and interests being essentially democratic and humanistic, have instilled those ideologies within the roots of OD and its practice. This was in response to how the use of direct authoritarian control had been perceived to have resulted in human suffering.

Ideas of systems thinking, democratic and humanistic approaches to organisational development still retained the idea of an individual being in control. Whether it is the manager or the developer of people and organisations, there is the expectation that they can stand outside of an organisational system and act upon it with control over

the people involved and the outcomes of their actions. Even when others such as Reason (1988) developed more participatory approaches to organisational development there was an expectation that it is possible to choose whether one stood inside the system as a participant or outside the system as a reflective manager or practitioner. The work of Ralph Stacey and others looking at the challenges of complexity were introduced to the MSc community but it seems to me now that they were introduced by way of offering no more than another set of tools to consider as a practitioner, rather than a challenge to prevailing orthodox ways of thinking about change.

Andy Smith, a senior manager at Roffey Park, has recently written on ideas of complexity and how they might be useful to practitioners of organisational development (Smith, 2014). He also argues that the roots of organisational development are in a humanistic tradition. He attempts to explain how concepts of complex responsive processes offer a challenge to the dominant management discourse and uses his own experience to illuminate how a practitioner might use ideas of complexity in practice. He ends with suggesting the use of a model describing the edge of chaos and how practitioners and managers might act in situations depending on how near or far away from certainty they are, as set out in Stacey (1995). Smith argues the use of this model to ensure that as practitioners we don't "throw the baby out with the bathwater". He acknowledges that Stacey has since rejected his own model but does not elaborate as to why. Smith argues for using his model to support a different kind of conversation with clients that embodies an either/and approach.

I think the suggestion of an either/and approach is interesting. This sounds close to the both/and method adopted by Kant resulting in the split between a formative teleology and causative rational choice, meaning that managers and developers are still expected to be in control (Stacey et al, 2000, pp19-29). I think Andy Smith's description of an either/and approach is how I have been attempting to place my own OD practice. I have been comfortable holding both systems thinking and complex responsive processes as if they were tools that I could call upon depending upon the kind of situation I was facing. I recognise now that thinking in this way allowed me to continue to see myself as if I was outside of any given situation and in a position of

control. I have also continued with the idea that we are able, through internal reflective processes, to become aware of our internal mental models and then choose to change them, to be in control of ourselves. The idea that complex responsive processes of relating, systems thinking, and ideas of individuals choosing their mental models were contradictory had not occurred to me.

Until very recently then I have been holding ideas of complex responsive processes of relating, and other ideas of systems thinking and changeable mental models, as if they were tools that were available to me to effect change and improvement in people and organisations or even myself. In an earlier iteration of this project I proposed that my belief was that good managers are those who are good developers of people and organisations. I can see that this belief is dependent upon the idea that the development of the individual and the organisation is predictable and it is therefore possible for someone to manage and develop someone else. As I have learned more about complex processes of relating, and the significant challenge offered to how I have been thinking, I am able to start to understand that the platform I have been using to support my thinking may be significantly and fundamentally flawed.

The challenge of complex responsive processes and an example of how my practice is changing as a result

Stacey (2012) describes models such as the Burke-Litwin model, an often quoted model in the practice of organisational development (Burke and Litwin, 1992), as tools and techniques of instrumental rationality. He suggests that the key features of these tools are:

- Efficient causality in that they offer the idea that if used they will yield specified positive results bringing to bear the possibility of prediction of outcomes.
- Second order abstractions in that they seek to simplify, categorise, standardise and measure, bringing clarity and uniformity making it easier to control the actions of others from a distance.

- That they take the form of having rules and steps in offering a form of prescription for managers and organisational developers to follow.

Stacey then goes on to say that, in what are inevitably uncertain and ambiguous processes of interaction between people, efficient causality does not apply and therefore claims that such models will enable any of us to choose and control future outcomes cannot be sustained due to the complex nature of the many micro interactions between people leading to fundamentally unpredictable patterning of outcomes. The idea of choosing and controlling future outcomes as managers or development practitioners is founded on ideas of formative teleology and causative rationality. Stacey et al (2000) instead point to a causal framework of transformative teleology in which human intentions, choices and plans are themselves interactions between people.

To illustrate this, the following narrative is an explication of a time when I used the Burke-Litwin model in a presentation. I presented to the board of an organisation the outcomes of a review I had conducted into the work of a division in the organisation. I presented the Burke Litwin model as the basis upon which I had understood my findings in the review. I drew attention to the suggested positive strategic impact that aligned leadership, organisational culture, and mission and strategy can have on an organisation. I then went on to explain how these factors were misaligned in the division under review and gave suggestions as to how changes in leadership would be likely to lead to improved performance. If what Stacey suggests is true then my assumptions and propositions were clearly flawed as a description of what was really going on. And yet, the presentation and my review were well received and indeed did result in changes to how the leadership within that division was shaped. What then might have been going on in my work and the resulting receipt of my presentation? I remember feeling very nervous about how my presentation would be received. As I was drawing my conclusions I was looking for something to use to support my findings that would draw a favourable response from those who had commissioned the work. I saw the Burke-Litwin model as the ideal choice because I knew it was well known and widely used by people working in organisational development. My previous interactions with some of the more senior participants in the meeting suggested that they took for granted the need for rationalist planning and ideas of

management control. I remember a moment in my presentation as I explained the model, when the chair of the meeting started nodding and smiling, whilst looking around at others in the meeting. I remember feelings of relief and confidence as she did this as it indicated to me that the model had had the effect of gaining some support for my thinking. It is clear then that I was using the model to manage my own anxiety about the impact of my work and to call upon some form of professional power in this meeting where I could be experienced as knowledgeable and therefore right in my assessment and proposals for change. Rather than the model being responsible for any change that was coming about I was clearly using the model to support me politically and practically in my work in a situation where ideas of management control and systems thinking were taken for granted.

Taking up the work of Stacey (2012) and thinking in a complex responsive processes way, I can see that as I have been describing my life I have been taking the position of myself as an individual, and the social field as the background to my actions. Griffin (2002) describes this as being from the viewpoint of systemic self-organisation where we understand the individual and the social as being separate. This is described as the collapsing of the paradox of human actions through a “both/and” way of thinking. Griffin (ibid, pp4-6) further suggests that this way of thinking has become pervasive and taken for granted through the general adoption of the scientific method. Griffin uses the work of American pragmatist George Herbert Mead to suggest an alternative to this way of thinking, which is to think in terms of participative self-organisation where we can hold the paradox that the individual and the social are the singular and the plural of the same process of human relating. This way of thinking suggests that we as people come to know ourselves only in relation to others and we are in a constant state of construction in a living present through the paradox of being constrained and enabled at the same time in those relationships. This idea of participative self-organizing and the causal framework of transformative teleology (Stacey et al, 2000) then calls into question how I have come to think about my practice so far through my MSc and my experiences of the application of authority, power and control.

By way of showing how this thinking is already shifting how I think about my work, I will describe how I have responded to a recently commissioned piece of work with

the international aid charity with which I currently work. Over recent months a process of distilling organisational values has been going on. This has culminated in a set of five words that have been described as the organisation's values. The process which culminated in these values was a relatively wide ranging set of discussions that sought to bring together people's views on the history of the organisation and what it stands for. I have now been asked to lead a process that seeks to 'embed' these values across the organisation. Approaches I have seen and experienced in other organisations to such a task have involved a communication process that sought to inform those working in the organisation as to what they are and an appeal, or even an instruction, for people to take account of these values in their work.

Stacey (2012) and Griffin (2002) both use the work of George Herbert Mead in describing how the tendency to imagine that an organisation exists as an entity which has overriding motives and values runs the risk of such a collective becoming a cult. They suggest that members of such a collective forget the 'as if' nature of the organisation. My experience of working in this international aid charity in which people regularly talk about what it does and what it stands for suggests that the forgetting of the 'as if' nature of the organisation often takes place. I have been left wondering how to take forward this work. Rather than attempt to embed the values from a single management perspective I have sought a way of using the idea of 'embedding' the values in a way that pays attention to how people make sense of their experience in their local context. I have therefore proposed that we take forward a series of conversations, led by local managers, to discuss these values with their teams and seek to make sense of them in their local context. The outcome of these conversations is unknown and no previously designed outcome has been included. I have yet to see how this work will progress.

I am also aware that in most of my interactions with managers at work I am encountering the manifestations of taken for granted notions of disciplinary power and expectations of management control (Stacey, 2012). This is noticeable in how we have developed our performance management framework with its emphasis on managers holding individuals to account for their performance against pre-set objectives and the annual planning process that requires organisational departments to plan outcomes for the coming twelve months (and even in some cases for three years)

and to set their budgets accordingly. As I become increasingly aware of the challenge of complex responsive processes to ways of thinking, and to realize what might be going on in my use of the tools of my OD practice, I find myself in something of a quandary. I am tasked with developing management capability in the institution in which I work. Not only is the very idea of my improving other managers' capability obviously problematic, it also leads to questions such as, who decides what capability is and what it looks like? At the moment this management development takes the form of a number of strands of work. One of the strands is a large-scale organisational wide management development programme. The leadership of the organisation have invested large sums of money in supporting managers in their development and the programme, supported by external consultants, is already underway. In addition to this I work with a number of individual managers and their teams in support of their planning and team development. As I pay attention to what we are really doing in these interactions I am beset with uncertainty as to how to act into these relationships and situations and yet I continue to do so. As I learn more about complex responsive processes of relating it may be that how I am acting will change in response to others. Through this programme I am keen to reflect upon that process.

In the iterative process of writing this paper I am noticing how in each iteration, with the ensuing feedback, I am paying more attention to the detail in my narrative and how the processes of relating are creating outcomes. I am also noticing how early drafts were indicative of my foundational assumptions, of the split between the individual and the social and the idea of a formative teleology for my own life story. Outside of my awareness it is possible that my writing is still displaying these assumptions but hopefully I am demonstrating how I am becoming more aware of how I am forming others and being formed by them in my participation in organisational life and in this DMan programme.

As I turn my attention to what I might write about in project two, I have become interested in how ideas of power and control are manifested in my work with the international aid charity. More specifically, how I as a facilitator work with others in the organisations. I have been asked by the CEO of this organisation to facilitate a full day meeting between her and her team of executive directors. This meeting, which they call the Directors Away Day, is to be used to discuss how they respond

individually and as a team to the challenges of the future. A number of pieces of work have been undertaken recently with the intention of understanding what future challenges might await the organisation. In recent conversations with the directors I get a growing sense that they think the organisation needs to be more globally networked in which people move from assumptions of using paper based systems and processes to an assumption of creating and using digitally based systems and processes. There is not yet much detail as to what is meant by a globally networked organisation or what people would be doing if they were creating and using digitally based systems and processes. A large meeting of senior managers is being convened to discuss this and the outputs of that large meeting will be used to inform the Directors Away Day (DAD) discussions. The CEO has asked me to undertake training in the use of a psychometric tool called the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI step II) to be able to support my facilitation of the DAD with each director understanding their MBTI step II profile ahead of the meeting. This is intended to enable them to gain insight into how they respond individually and as a team to what they are perceiving as a large scale change to the organisation. These insights will then be used to explore and decide how the directors will create a strategy for responding to the challenge of creating a globally networked digital organisation. As I write this I note that it is assumed that it is the directors' role to create a strategy for the future of the organisation. They often describe this as the creation of a vision for the future. In project two, through an exploration of a narrative of the events of this upcoming DAD meeting, I want to explore further the assumptions that are held by this group of directors as to what they think they are doing in the creation of a vision or strategy. I also want to explore what may really be going on in the meeting in terms of how dynamics of power and contested ideas that may emerge in the conversations between me, the CEO and the directors.

Project two: Facilitation and Shame: working together to avoid challenges to our sense of self in the recognition of others

Introduction

Since 2009 I have been working in organisations as a facilitator. I have developed my practice through a mixture of academic learning, watching and experiencing the practice of others as well as learning through reflecting on my own actions as I worked as a facilitator. My current job involves working with the senior team of directors at an international aid charity. In project one I have discussed how in my experience of managing and being managed, assumptions about power and control are made in organisations based on systems thinking and formative teleology as described by Stacey et al, (2000) and how these assumptions were taken up by me and others. I also pointed to how my thinking is being challenged by reflecting on my practice, and reading and discussing ideas related to complex responsive processes of relating.

The narrative that follows this introduction relates a series of events leading up to and including an away-day with a team of directors in my organisation that I was asked to facilitate by the CEO. My experience is that the managers I work with, and who ask me to work with their teams, take the nature of the work of a facilitator for granted. People often talk about the need for someone outside of their team to come and help them think together. Sometimes this involves them coming together to create strategies and plans and sometimes it involves them thinking and talking about how they are relating together. In this case I was asked to help by the CEO to support her and her team of directors in exploring the way they were relating to each other, especially when there are disagreements and misunderstandings. In telling and analysing this narrative I will inquire into how people cope with and seek to manage the inherent uncertainty involved in situations where there is the potential for transformation, by which I mean the potential for change in people's sense of identity and the patterns of how people relate to each other in groups. I am interested in how people in groups work with each other as they act into the future, with a focus on my role as a facilitator.

What is Facilitation?

In considering what we mean by facilitation, the work of Heron (1977; 1989), Reason & Rowan (1981) and Reason (1988) suggests that the concept of the role of facilitator emerged from the work of Carl Rogers and person centred therapy. In his work on client centred therapy, Rogers gives examples of group therapy through which he suggests that groups, through the experience of group therapy, grow a “remarkable cohesiveness that parallels the unity evident in individual therapy” (1951, p288). Rogers seems to be pointing at the potential for a group in sharing their feelings to come together as a single entity whereby individuals transcend their own sense of self to become part of a supra-individual. He suggests that early hurtful experiences limit our ability as individuals to come closer to others and through engaging with a group people can experience themselves differently. Rogers suggests that the therapist is attempting to “reconstruct the perceptual field of the individual at the moment of expression and to communicate this understanding with skill and sensitivity” (ibid, p289). The therapist does this through clarifying feelings, reflecting feelings and restating what someone has said. Rogers (ibid, p290) suggests that people develop sophisticated ways of preventing intimacy when physical proximity is forced upon them and that group therapy is a way of overcoming these defences and allowing people to experience others differently, learning to give and receive emotional support and thereby being able to redefine themselves in relation to others. I think Rogers, from a humanistic and individualistic perspective, is giving a useful indication of the potentially unconscious, psychodynamic nature of group behaviour and the role of the facilitator.

As a typical example of the discourse on facilitation that has previously influenced my practice, Harvey et al (2002) suggest that the role of the facilitator refers to an individual who engages with others in a process of enabling them as individuals and groups to understand the processes they have to go through to change aspects of their behaviour or attitudes to themselves, their work or other individuals. They conclude that a facilitator is likely to need a set of core skills involving communication and interpersonal skills.

In another example Wardale (2008) suggests that effective facilitation is predicated on four clear stages that are considered important. These stages are:

- Planning
- Intervention
- Immediate Outcomes
- Implementation

Wardale (ibid) also discusses the choice of whether to engage an internal or external facilitator and suggests that in organisations generally there is a preference for an external facilitator who may be seen to be more impartial, objective, and more confident to take greater risks by virtue of their independence, whereas internal facilitators may find these things challenging as an employee. However, the internal facilitator is recognised as potentially having more knowledge of the situation, history and culture of the organisation and groups involved.

I propose that the work of Harvey and Wardale is indicative of much of the literature on facilitation in which the authors hold the assumption that an individual facilitator is making independent rational choices including when to be more or less objective, towards a pre-planned outcome when working with groups. In this way the facilitator is instrumentalised and seen as separate from and acting upon a group.

Bens, (2005), Schwarz, (2002), Hogan, (2003), McCain and Tobey, (2004), Unger et al, (2013), Bee and Bee, (1998) and Mann, (2007) are all examples of literature that describes facilitation in this way. Wardale (2013) conducted research with both internal and external facilitators as well as managers who were the commissioners of the facilitators' services. This research involved carrying out interviews across various work sectors such as arts, law and the public sector. This research found that facilitation was conducted over four stages; pre-planning; facilitated event; immediate outcome of the event; and transfer or implementation of the outcome of the event. In the preparation stage, thoroughness of preparation was deemed to be very important by research participants. It was seen as important for facilitators to properly understand the participant group, agree appropriate target outcomes, negotiate process

and discuss personality differences. Clarity of expected outcome was deemed to be of significant importance. In facilitating events facilitators felt that ineffective use of processes and not having a deep enough bag of tools and tricks was quoted as being the reasons for ineffective facilitation. Context was identified as being relevant to successful facilitation, although the authors merely suggested that further research was required on the impact of context on effective facilitation. It is clear to me that this research supports my earlier contention that, across organisational sectors it is more or less taken for granted.

That a successful facilitation process is one where an individual facilitator, engaging with a group as a separate entity, prepares pre-planned outcomes and applies tools and techniques to achieve those pre-planned outcomes. The effectiveness of the facilitated event is predicated on the achievement of those outcomes. Any failure to do so is seen as a failure of the individual facilitator.

Alternatively, facilitation could be said to be what George Herbert Mead describes as a social object (Mead, 1938). Mead distinguished between physical objects as things existing in nature, and therefore the objects of study by the natural sciences, and social objects that exist only in human experience and are therefore the proper objects of study in social science. Mead uses the example of markets to demonstrate what he means by social objects. When someone offers to buy food this involves a range of responses from those offering to sell food. In this interaction those making the offer to buy food can only do so if they are able to know how to make that offer by taking the attitude of those who are selling the food, and likewise someone offering to sell food can only make that offer if they are able to take up the attitude, or the tendency to act, of the person offering to buy the food.

To understand this in terms of facilitation, the facilitator can only facilitate if he or she is able to take the attitude or the tendency to act of those who he or she is seeking to facilitate. Those being facilitated can only participate in being facilitated if they are able to take the attitude or the tendency to act of the facilitator. We can only do this through having experienced such events in the past and learned to play the game of participating in a facilitated group meeting. As I have described earlier, in the social object of facilitation we take much for granted in the existence of an agenda that is

often set out by the facilitator. This agenda will often have pre-existing objectives or outcomes that are desired for the meeting. These facilitated meetings will very often involve tools such as feedback mechanisms and personality profiling instruments such as MBTI (MBTI stands for Myers Briggs Type Indicator), which is one of many such tools. However, according to Mead, we can only make sense of the social object through the particularization in each specific situation, in the case of this narrative, the away-day with the directors. The thinking of Mead represents a very different way of thinking about facilitation to that which is set out in the descriptions of facilitation by the other authors referenced above which suggest a generalizable and decontextualized process. In their descriptions of facilitation they describe a method that considers interaction between people as individuals in a sender-receiver model of communication in which individuals work in a rational way with each other towards a pre-determined outcome. In their case, facilitation is a practice learned and applied by individuals, whereas facilitation when viewed as a social object is a shared set of expectations that constrain and enable participants in groups which then shapes their social interaction through gestures and responses. Thinking of facilitation as a social object helps me understand myself as a participant in the process of interaction within a group rather than being tempted to think of myself as somehow being outside of the group and acting upon it.

In reading and responding to the narrative that follows, a number of colleagues in my organisation and in my learning group on this doctorate programme have said that they recognised it as a description of many such meetings that they have attended in the past. My practice as a facilitator is drawn from many such meetings I have attended and engaged in over recent years. It is clear that ideas of coming together in groups or teams needing to be facilitated by an individual who would not normally be part of that group, often using psychometric tools and processes, have become accepted and unchallenged in organisational contexts. In this sense, the facilitated team away-day is a normal everyday occurrence in organisational life.

In engaging with the CEO in planning and facilitating the away-day with the directors, I was making unconscious assumptions based on the descriptions of facilitation in the literature typified by Wardale (2008), Wardale (2013) and Harvey et al (2002), about what it means to facilitate such away-days and from my previous

experience of such events in which I had both participated and facilitated. My intention in exploring this narrative was to reflexively inquire into my work with a group of directors as a facilitator and to think about the social processes of facilitation in a different way from that most commonly assumed in both the literature and common practice.

A narrative account of the planning and implementation of a facilitated away-day with a group of Directors

I have been having conversations with Barbara, the Chief Executive, about how she is working with her team. In one of these conversations she mentioned that she was planning to have an away-day with her team of directors and wanted to focus on the process of how the team were working together. She said that she would normally seek to have such a day facilitated by an external facilitator. She has until now used a facilitator that has been known to her for some years. She expressed some reticence about asking me to facilitate as an internal member of staff. However, she wanted to explore the possibility and we agreed to continue to discuss what an agenda for the away-day might look like. She also said that she wanted to check that Michael, the HR Director, would be comfortable with me facilitating the day as he is also my line manager. In this conversation I got a sense that Barbara was setting out her stall, that she was testing me out as to how we might work together. This seemed like a process in which she was demonstrating her ability to choose or not to choose me as a facilitator and through doing so she was asserting her dominant position in our relationship. I hadn't worked with the group before and I very much wanted to do so. Not just to be able to work with a new group of senior managers, I also felt that a certain amount of kudos came with working with the CEO and directors. This led me to be both excited and nervous about the work. The excitement and nervousness came from my sense of putting myself and my practice as a facilitator on the line with the possibility that I might be found wanting by this influential group, and an anticipation of working with a new group of people, not knowing how this might unfold.

In several meetings leading up to the away-day Barbara and I discussed and shaped the agenda. She was keen to develop a deeper sense of trust in her team. She said that

she had previously used a psychological assessment tool called MBTI step II and was keen to use it again with the team to explore how their preferences and behaviours might be supporting or getting in the way of them working well together. I expressed some doubts about the tool and that I wasn't trained to use it (the use of the tool is licensed by a company named OPP and one must be trained by them before they will allow its use). MBTI step II is built on another tool, MBTI step I. My experience of being trained in MBTI step I had been difficult.

In that training I participated with others in learning about the tool and how to use it. The training was delivered in a way that instructed me in the purpose of the tool, how it was to be used in detail, and which questions might best illicit understanding for the individuals undergoing the assessment as to which personality type they might be. The assessment consists of a self-assessment, where the individual assesses themselves against a set of expected behaviours within each of the four dichotomies, which comprise an individual's type. They then see the results of a self-completed questionnaire, which also gives an assessment of their type. Through a discussion of the self assessed type and the questionnaire assessment, an individual comes to understand their 'best-fit' type. During the training I occasionally digressed in conversation with the person who was being assessed and when I did this I was instructed not to do so as it could result in my not passing the course. At the end of the training programme I was watched and assessed by the trainers delivering the programme as to how well I had adhered to the process by performing a mock assessment with another individual who was undergoing the training. I found the training to be restrictive and formulaic and the experience of it to be frustrating and annoying. I was loathe to engage with the training and the MBTI tool again. Nevertheless, Barbara wanted to use it so I undertook to do the training to allow me to do so.

Again, I experienced Barbara's insistence on using the tool about which I had some reservations, as a reinforcement of her dominance both as a manager senior to me in the organisation and as a client in receipt of my services as a facilitator. This interaction seems to support Wardale's (2008) contention that an internal facilitator might be less likely to take risks, in this case by resisting the choices of the Chief Executive, although it is entirely possible or even likely that external facilitators

would feel an emotional or commercial pressure to comply in the same way. However, my sense was that the power dynamics of this situation were the result of the emerging relationship between Barbara and me and the roots of how the dynamic was emerging was much more complex than simply being about me making rational choices about how much to resist or challenge.

In a later meeting we discussed the away-day again and we started to discuss the dynamics of how her discussions with directors were interpreted and how they resulted in changes in how they made decisions. We discussed how Barbara often felt that the conversations between directors resulted in a defensive pattern emerging where directors would defend their actions to other directors which she felt disabled the group in having productive conversations. I agreed that I had also seen that pattern and that it seemed to me like a tennis match whereby the issue would be knocked between the directors like a tennis ball in order to win points. I suggested that I bring a tennis ball with me to the away-day to illustrate what we might experience. She said that she was terrible at catching things and it would have to be a big ball that wouldn't hurt anyone. She suggested a blow up globe would be good. We eventually settled on a brief agenda for the away-day which I wrote up and sent to her. That evening I scoured the local shops for a blow up globe without success. I eventually bought some balloons that I hoped would suffice.

In the following weeks running up to the away-day Barbara and I exchanged several emails in which she made some small tweaks to the agenda. The final change that she instigated led to us agreeing to use a video of a TED talk given by Brene Brown on her research into shame. During our planning of the away-day Barbara had discussed how important it was for the directors to feel able to be vulnerable enough with each other to share how they were feeling about how they were getting on more openly. We eventually settled on the following agenda for the day:

08:45 Tea and Coffee

09:15 Reflection (Darren, fundraising director)

09.30 360 Feedback

What sense can we make of the 360 feedback? What are our strengths and weaknesses individually and as a team? How will we respond to them?

11.00 Break for coffee

11:15 MBTI Step II: Understanding our impact on each other and the wider organisation in times of change.

We will share our reflections and learning from our Step II profile and how our preferences show up in our work. How do we enable and constrain each other, especially in our response to decision-making and change?

13:00 Lunch Discussions: Following up on SMG: Next Steps

14:00 How do we use our authority individually and collectively? Can we be different together?

15:30 Our Commitments for the Future

In order to become a digital and global organisation what will we need to do to lead the organisation well?

What do we need to do differently now, individually and collectively to give us the best possible chance of success in the future?

How will we hold each other accountable for the change?

17:00 Close

It is my experience that this agenda is typical of the outcome of the planning of such away-days. It represents a series of planned sessions with pre-determined outcomes that minimize the potential for novelty. This gives the participants some comfort about what to expect on the day. In a final exchange of emails Barbara signed it off with an acknowledgement that the agenda was now ready and that she planned to send it to the directors only a couple of days ahead of the away-day to avoid them becoming anxious about it. My assumption was that Barbara was imagining the Directors having a sense of anxiety about what they might be expected to do together on the day and wanted to limit the time that they might experience such anxiety. She also made reference to feelings of vulnerability as she was feeling a little trepidatious ahead of the away-day. I replied with my thanks and that I too was feeling a little anxious in my anticipation of it too. This was in response to a previous conversation where we had discussed what it meant to be confidently vulnerable.

Facilitating the Away-day

On the day of the away-day I had arranged for the room to have six comfortable chairs organised in a circle without a table in the middle. As we entered the room and the directors saw how it had been arranged, Sharon, the director of policy, suggested we shouldn't make anything of her sitting near the door and Neil, the international director suggested it was good not to have a table between us, and Barbara made a joke about expecting something like a therapy session. There was a lot of nervous laughter at these exclamations and I was immediately struck by a curiosity about what these comments might be about. I welcomed everyone to the workshop and explained that we were going to start with a video from Brene Brown about her research into shame, this would not necessarily have been a surprise to the directors as Barbara had previously engaged with them through the work of Brene Brown in encouraging them to think about their vulnerability. I then started the video and we all watched it.

A video about shame

In the video (Brown, 2015) Brene Brown describes how in her research she came to the conclusion that vulnerability is essential to whole-hearted living (she does not describe what wholehearted living is and seems to expect the audience to take a mutual understanding of that for granted). She describes this through a narrative of a conversation with a friend which is confessional in nature which is in itself describing a form of confessional speech in her previous video appearance. The public confession seems to be important for her in what she describes as a personal transformational experience. Brown says that she is regularly asked to talk to people in businesses and companies but is asked not to talk about vulnerability and instead to talk about innovation, creativity and change. Yet, she suggests, vulnerability is the birthplace of innovation, creativity and change. Brown seems to locate shame as an individual experience expressed through internal conversation with what she calls a little gremlin. She suggests that shame is destructive and highly correlated with addiction, depression, violence and aggression. Foucault (1998, p63) describes how in modern society the confession as a religious act has been employed in a series of relationships including that of patient and therapist. If we take up the idea that the role of the facilitator has emerged from the role of the therapist (Heron 1977 and 1989; Reason & Rowan, 1981 and Reason, 1988) then maybe the social object of facilitation

as some sort of public or group confessional with me as facilitator/priest is what is going on here and is suggestive of what that means for Barbara's expectations of the group and herself. It is maybe no wonder then that the group entered the room with some trepidation.

The video ended and there was a moment of quiet in the room, and I started the talking. I brought attention to the comments people had made on the way into the room and wondered aloud what they might have indicated, as I did so I felt that I was drawing attention to something that may be important as an indicator of how this group expected to work together and how comfortable they might be as a group in talking about their feelings. I wondered whether their comments had come from a sense of anxiety that the room had been arranged differently to how they usually met. I explained that I had felt some anxiety in deciding how to arrange the room, knowing that the absence of a central table might meet with some hostility from them. Sharon said that she had been joking and there seemed to be some awkwardness between all of us. There followed a long pause, there seemed to be no-one who wanted to pick up the questions about what their comments on entering the room might mean.

Using Three Hundred and Sixty Degree Feedback and Competency Frameworks

I moved on to briefly explain the agenda that Barbara and I had prepared and suggested we move onto the first session on the agenda. The directors had all received three hundred and sixty degree feedback in recent weeks. This feedback was compiled from submissions from people across the organisation. Some of these were direct reports to the directors, some were peers and there was also feedback from Barbara as their line manager. The feedback was in response to questions as to how well the directors were demonstrating the behaviours that are described in the organisation's competency framework. In arranging the workshop I had come to an agreement with Barbara as to how we would display the feedback. We agreed to show the individual director scores and a mean average score against each competency with the individual scores being anonymous. This meant that only the individual directors knew which scores theirs were but they could see how their score matched up against other directors' scores.

I introduced a discussion on the data and asked the directors what sense they were making of it. Neil said that having the data displayed competitively in the way it was may not be helpful, like a football league table. I responded by suggesting that whilst I could see that the data had been set out in a comparative format, that didn't necessarily mean that it was competitive. Michael agreed that it was intended to be comparative rather than competitive. As we discussed this and made our way through each competency, Sharon said that she didn't want to appear defensive but without knowing from whom the feedback was coming she found it difficult to understand the context of the comments and scores. There were several comments and agreements in the group of this nature as we went through the session.

As I reflect on this part of my narrative I am struck by Neil's comments about feeling that the data was creating competition between the directors. I presumed that he meant that he was having his behaviour compared to the behaviour of others in a way that those who demonstrated the behaviours set out in the competency framework best would be looked on more favourably than those who did not. I notice that I discounted this and instead made a gesture to suggest that they were in fact comparative rather than competitive. On reflection there seems little difference between competitive and comparative, given that the standard of expected behaviour was being dictated by a set of generalised, desired behaviours within a competency framework that does not pay any attention to the local context. I am also struck by the comment from Sharon, that although she didn't want to appear defensive, without knowing from whom the feedback was coming she found it difficult to understand the context of the comments and scores. I can see that Sharon was reflexively pointing out the challenge of using such tools out of context and others also offered such comments as we went through the session. I think she was pointing to how she was anticipating that her remarks might be taken as being resistant. Sharon's comments about context were never taken up, and yet it seems they are important reflexive questions about the validity of the competency framework. I am left wondering what would have happened if we had been able to have a conversation that could have legitimately challenged the usefulness of it as a tool in their particular context. What happened was very little, in that although we discussed the feedback, it was in a fairly

cursory way that did little to enlighten or help with any understanding of the way that this group works together.

Three hundred and sixty degree feedback processes and competency frameworks take for granted that the skills and competencies in any given situation are located in individuals and therefore the purpose of the three hundred and sixty degree feedback is to show how managers are doing in demonstrating their level of competency against any given indicator. The job of the individual is, therefore, to consider this feedback and change their behaviour accordingly to better demonstrate the required behaviour. Therefore, cognitivist psychology and strategic choice theory (Stacey, 2007) underpins the processes of competency frameworks and three hundred and sixty degree feedback as feedback loops are used to measure performance against expectation and adjustments are then made to the human systems (in this case the directors) to improve performance. The relevance and generalizability of the competency framework is taken for granted and unchallenged. Challenges to the relevance of any given competency framework, such as that described by Horton (2000), would be likely to be interpreted as resistance and would require further training. Stacey (2012) refers to such things as competency frameworks as techniques of instrumental rationality and, using the work of Michael Foucault, demonstrates how they are used as instruments of disciplinary power to which everyone is then subjected, even those leaders who design them. In considering my own experience of working in organisations and using competency frameworks I would agree with Stacey that they are often used in a disciplinary way to constrain and encourage particular behaviours. To give an example, every spring as an employee of my organisation I am required to complete a performance appraisal giving examples of how I have performed against the objectives that I agreed with my manager the previous year. Alongside this assessment I am also required to assess my behaviours set against the desired behaviours as set out in our corporate competency framework. To 'support' me in this assessment I receive anonymised three hundred and sixty degree feedback from a selection of people including the people that I manage, my peers and my managers. This assessment is graded from one to three depending on how well I have behaved. This process is required of all employees. My experience is that such a process is not unique to my current employer, I have completed similar

assessments throughout my career. Perhaps it was this sense of being disciplined and constrained that Sharon and Neil were expressing.

Using Myers Briggs Type Indicator

We stopped for a coffee and when we returned we moved on to look at what the MBTI assessments could show us about how they were likely to respond to each other and as a group, especially in issues of change, decision making and communication. I asked each individual director to write their name on a post-it note and to append it to the posters around the room. The MBTI tool is arranged across eight pairs of dichotomies under which are five other pairs of facets.

I asked the directors to place their post-it notes on the facet score that related to their profile. They did this for each facet on the posters. At one point I found myself directing people to move on, chivvying them along much as a teacher would do to errant pupils. As I noticed that I was doing this, I caught myself acting in a way that I hadn't intended but seemed to me to be both appropriate and inappropriate at the same time. It seemed to me that no-one was paying any attention to me behaving in this way, other than to do as I asked, nor did anyone object. I encouraged the group to share examples of how past experiences might illustrate or illuminate what we were seeing on the poster.

The MBTI tool, was derived from the work of Carl Jung by Katharine Cook Briggs and Isabel Briggs Myers. It is based on the typological theories proposed by Carl Jung in his book *Psychological Types* (Sharp, 1987). The tool consists of a questionnaire and an assessment process which seeks to uncover innate preferences, which Jung suggested were inherent in all individuals. There is a parallel here with the use of the three hundred and sixty degree feedback as a tool in the preceding session. Both tools take for granted an individual psychology within which individuals can learn about their own mental models through external feedback processes and in uncovering this learning can make individual choices to change the way they behave to better align with what is expected of them.

I notice how in examining people's behaviours using the MBTI tool the motivation and responsibility for how the directors behave is rooted in the individual director and their innate typology, and therefore the dynamics of the group, can only be understood through how each of these individual types interact with each other to create an outcome. I also note how this process places me in the position of knowledge and authority as the sole arbiter of the process and the only one qualified in the use of the tool. It may not be so surprising then that I was tempted into taking the position of the teacher, with the directors as my pupils, in a dynamic with me as the expert and them as passive novices.

Trying to Notice How We Were Relating Together Using a Balloon

In the afternoon of the away-day we started with a session entitled: How do we use our authority individually and collectively? Can we be different together? I tried to take a different approach to my participation in this session, where in the previous sessions with the three sixty feed-back and MBTI I had been prominent in directing the process, this time I did not do so and tried to allow the process of the session to emerge from the interactions. I was keen to move away from a prescribed process towards a more open conversation. Barbara explained that she had been approached by a member of the policy team directly who had expressed concern about a piece of work that had been done by the communications team which used dogs' behaviour to illustrate issues of gender. The member of the policy team had felt that the work would be perceived as frivolous and inappropriate. Barbara had suggested to her that she speak to the communications team and ask that the work not be published in any way until there had been a wider discussion as to whether and how it would be used. This had somehow gotten translated by others in the organisation into a message that Barbara had not liked the work and had it cut. As the directors discussed the issue, other examples were introduced to illustrate similar patterns. Sharon suggested it might be better for them to share their plans at the earliest opportunity to enable a more thorough discussion as they progressed. She used an example of how the decision by the finance directorate to set carbon budgets had not been fully discussed and had resulted in overly tight budgets that didn't allow the appropriate level of

travel. Terry, the finance director, responded that his department had been given the task of setting the carbon budgets and they had apportioned them according to headcount. There followed an exchange between Sharon and Terry that seemed to demonstrate the pattern of defensiveness that Barbara and I had discussed in our planning conversations.

I took this as a prompt for me to interrupt the flow of the discussion by blowing up a balloon. I introduced the idea that to avoid the conversation ending up in a defensive argumentative pattern perhaps we could use the balloon to refocus the issue into the centre of the room. I suggested that this might help them to notice the patterns that were emerging between them, thus introducing the process that I had agreed with Barbara in our planning of the day. This shift from allowing the conversation to emerge to directing using the balloon resulted in a passing of the balloon when people started talking, with it moving between individuals and the centre of the room. I suggested that we return to the example of the carbon budgets and how it might have been improved by them each sharing their plans earlier to enable better agreement on such issues. Neil responded that he would find it difficult to do so. He used militaristic metaphors to suggest that he needed to defend his teams. I noticed the militaristic language and asked Neil what the use of those kinds of metaphors might mean for him. He appeared to stop short, he said he didn't know, and that he would need to think about it further. I suggested that others in the room may feel similarly and thanked him for being willing to respond in the way that he had. I asked for views from the rest of the directors but no one seemed willing to continue to explore it. Sharon started to talk about how what she called the 'myth' of how Barbara's decisions about what she did and didn't like was patterned across the organisation. I suggested that the word 'myth' might be important and that they might explore it through a mythical metaphor involving kings and queens. In doing this I was hoping that the group would use my invitation to explore the power dynamics between them. However, my invitation wasn't picked up by anyone in the room and the conversation continued as if I had not said anything. The session ended with us breaking for coffee and with a recognition of this myth building being important but without a resolution about how they might want to try to change it together.

In this session I was attempting to use the balloon to offer a new way for the group to discuss their relationships but in doing so I was still focusing on the two-way interaction of two individuals and missing the wider impact of the dynamics of the group. I was also, through the use of the balloon, exercising power over what happened within the group and deciding through my intervention what we should talk about and how we should talk about it. I notice how readily the directors agreed to my working with them in this way. There was little or no resistance to my directive way of facilitating. It seems to me that in taking up the disciplining and constraining processes I have described earlier I participated in a pattern of behaviour that I, and the rest of the group, had unconsciously created together. Neil, in his reaction to the request from Barbara for the directors to share their plans at an earlier stage, indirectly expressed how vulnerable this made him feel and that he felt unable to do so. The reaction from the group was to become quiet. People seemed unsure what to do next, it seemed to me that at this point there was potential for something different to happen. In my asking Neil what might be significant about his use of militaristic language, I was seeking to explore how Neil had expressed himself and whether this may have been something shared in the group. However, in a similar way to my offering a discussion using mythical language, and in offering to discuss the director's initial comments as they entered the room, the idea wasn't taken up and, after a pause, the discussion fell into what seemed a pattern where the participants acted in a way that seemed familiar and usual. It seems that when moments offering the potential for novelty arose in our relating together there followed a pause, as if no one knew what to do in facing a moment that had not been encountered before and which did not follow a familiar pattern. In these moments it felt to me as if time was suspended until I or someone else was able to say something that re-engaged us back into a known pattern of relating that allowed us to continue. It seems to me this may indicate a pattern of relating that maintains the status quo in response to the anticipation of feelings of shame that are caused by an unpredictable future. This echoes Brene Brown's (Brown, 2015) suggestion that vulnerability and therefore the risk of shame are core to novelty and innovation.

A Disappointing End to the Day

In the final session of the day, Barbara and I had planned to move the conversation to talk about what they might do differently together as a consequence of the day's discussions. I suggested that we take up the issues raised in the MBTI session. The directors discussed how they communicated to the rest of the staff in the organisation and they agreed to use their weekly meetings to share what might be worrying them more and to be more open about the issues that they were experiencing. They also agreed to spend more time on priority issues in their bigger monthly meetings and not to fill the agenda with lots of items as they had in the past. They planned to always end their meetings with a discussion of what messages would be communicated to the wider organisation and who would ensure that those messages were sent out from them as a group. They agreed to do this through a podcast after each monthly meeting and finally to pay attention to where the balloon might be. The away-day ended with an upbeat feeling. The directors thanked me for facilitating their day and we all left in good spirits. In the days that followed I got further thanks from the participants.

I remember being disappointed by the discussion in the group in the last session. The conversation became rather mundane as the group made plans for some minor changes to the way they worked together and how they communicated with others in the organisation. I felt a sense of lost opportunity and that very little had shifted in how the group worked together as a result of the day we had spent together. Even now I feel that I participated in a set-piece of relatively predictable conversations in which we all, as participants, contrived to stay within a pattern of relating to which we all had become accustomed and which felt safe. It is this feeling of planning the processes involved in the away-day to provide a safe yet apparently constraining environment that I find interesting.

Feeling Shame at the Idea of Infantilising Others

I have since offered this narrative, along with some early ideas as to what I might focus on as I started to analyse the narrative, to my learning set within the doctoral programme. The response from them was to offer some similar lines of inquiry to the ones that I was already thinking about. However, within that early discussion in the learning set, there was also a suggestion that the use of such tools as the balloon in

such team meetings can be infantilizing for the participants. My initial reaction to the idea that I had engaged in processes that may have been infantilising was one of shock and resistance. I certainly hadn't intended to infantilise anyone and I felt shame at the idea that I might have done so. I think the combination of feelings of shame and experiencing learning at the same time, once I had overcome my shock, were part of the genesis of the movement of my thinking in this project.

What is Shame?

In discussing this project with my learning set we got involved in a discussion about the difference between shame and guilt. There seemed to be a point of view that shame is an individually felt affect, resulting from feeling socially exposed as inferior, whereas guilt was as a result of having done something that is seen by yourself and potentially others as wrong. I took from that conversation that shame is about who we are seen to be to others, and guilt is about what we have done. The conversation resulted in a definite sense that feelings of shame required us to be publicly exposed in some way. However, this way of describing shame did not fit well with me. My recollection of having experienced feelings of shame did not necessarily involve being publicly exposed in any way. Dearing and Tangney (2002, p15) state that in empirical studies there is little difference between people reporting solitary shame and guilt experiences. In studies 17.2% of children reported experiencing solitary shame against 14.9% experiencing solitary guilt. Similarly, in adults, 16.5% reported experiencing solitary shame experiences against 22.5% experiencing solitary guilt. So, it seems that in studies people have reported feelings of shame without being publicly exposed in any way. Dearing and Tangney (ibid, p17) go on to suggest that there is little difference in what sort of event or behaviour might induce shame or guilt, stating that in their study respondents gave similar examples. They argue that the main difference seems to be that shame is an individually felt affect that is about who we are and guilt is about something we have done, a conclusion I had already reached based on my own experience. Therefore, in the case of guilt, reparation is possible whereas with shame there is a felt need to be not who we are, resulting in a wish to run away, or to hide, or to avoid the situation.

This then leads to me wondering what might be going on in processes of shame if it is not necessarily about being publicly exposed. Stacey (2007), Stacey et al (2000), Griffin (2002), and Mowles (2015), draw on the thinking of George Herbert Mead, Norbert Elias and John Dewey, among others, to propose that the individual and the social are the singular and the plural of a single process. Mead (1934, p178) proposes that the self-consciousness of individuals emerges from the internal conversations in which one becomes an object to oneself. This conversation involves a 'me' (an identity) which is the attitude of a group taken toward oneself. The individual's response to this me is the 'I', which is the spontaneous individual response to the individual's perception of the group's view of him/herself. This 'I' is potentially novel in its response and therefore offers the possibility of change in others as they go through the same complex responsive process of relating. Individually the I and the me represent a single phenomenon in which the 'I' in the living present can only be understood as part of the 'me'. It is important to understand that Mead describes the I and the Me as inseparable elements or parts of an ongoing process.

If we take up Mead's (ibid) suggestion that our sense of conscious responsibility comes as a result of the I/me dialectic then who we are is fundamentally social. If we are faced with a situation where the assumed attitude of the others in our social situation causes our 'I' to cast doubt on our previous understanding of our 'me', regardless of whether that doubt is publicly known, a feeling of shame is the result, as we can no longer be who we thought we were. This gives us an explanation of how feelings of solitary shame can be experienced as an internal but nevertheless social process.

Processes of Learning Involving Shame

Aram (2001) suggests that such processes of shame are inevitably induced in a learning process. She suggests that a learning process (she uses the examples of university learning or therapy) involves accepting that there is something which we do not know which in turn results in a loss of the power of knowing and a challenge to our sense of who we are, thus giving rise to the individually felt shame. I think therefore that Aram is describing significant learning processes that offer the risk to a

change in our sense of self, learning processes that are potentially transformational of our identity. If the away-day is an intended learning process for the individuals and the group that is potentially transformative of themselves and the way they work together, then according to Aram, processes of shame, which she suggests may come in the guise of anger, contempt or withdrawal, will be inevitable. Aram describes the paradoxical way in which the destructiveness of shame is at the same time potentially, but not necessarily, creative. This point is missed by Brene Brown (2015) who sees shame as entirely destructive. Aram (2001) describes this feeling of shame as being the individually felt instances of incremental transformations of identity that occur in groups as people make meaning together as an emergent property of their interaction. Thinking now about the away-day I think we missed an opportunity to reflexively work with the dynamics of the group and the feelings of shame that such work might have created. I think instead we worked together as a group in a planned way to maintain familiar patterns of relating to avoid or minimise such shame. The question then is, why might we have done so?

Stacey, using the work of Antonio Damasio, describes a physical aspect of social interaction,

He (Damasio) holds that mind arises when bodies interact with each other and that changes in body rhythms continually affect mental states and the sense of self. It is not a great step to suggest that when people are relating to each other, in the presence of each other, their body rhythms might resonate with each other. An intuitive sense of how another is feeling could well be conveyed in this way (Stacey, 2003, p115).

Lewis et al (2000) describe a process of limbic resonance which occurs in all social mammals including humans. They suggest that when human beings interact with each other a process of social resonance occurs whereby our limbic systems resonate at the same frequency. Warm social contact instigates the release of physically internal opiate-like chemicals. Whereas according to Dossey (2005), feelings of shame lead to inflammation and stress in the human body.

Elias describes a civilizing process of human society based on an increasing sense of shame,

The feeling of shame is a specific excitation, a kind of anxiety which is automatically reproduced in the individual on certain occasions by force of habit. Considered superficially it is fear of degradation or, more generally, of other people's gestures of superiority (2000, p415).

Elias proposes that people are susceptible to other people's gestures of superiority if they accord with the,

agency of self-constraint implanted in the individual by others on whom he was dependent, who possessed superiority over him..... The conflict expressed in shame-fear is not merely a conflict of the individual with the prevalent society of opinion; the individual's behaviour has brought him into conflict with part of himself that represents this social opinion (ibid, p415).

It is the bringing together of the thinking of Mead's and Elias's perspectives that Aram (2001) uses when she describes shame as being inevitable in situations where there is potential for transformation, as it is through this complex responsive processes of relating viewpoint that shame is perceived as the individually felt affect emerging from a social process involving inclusion and exclusion, whereby individually the 'I' is constantly responding to the shifting 'me' as an ongoing process within a group process whilst at the same time the 'me' is constantly responding to the gestures and responses of other 'I's/'me's. Mowles (2015) draws on the thinking of Hegel as he describes this dialectical process of movement between polarities of paradox, such as the individual forming and being formed by the social at the same time as being inherent in our experience of participating in groups. The thinking of Mead, Elias and Mowles helps me to understand how, if shame is an individually felt affect of a social process, it is possible to feel solitary shame without public exposure. It is this taking the attitude of others to oneself that allows our sense of self to be exposed to our self in an internal I/me dialogue that results in the felt sense of shame.

Working Together to Avoid the Risk of Shame

It is easy to see how we might avoid putting ourselves at risk of experiencing the discomfort of shame. To do so, as our sense of self is fundamentally social, we must then work together through our gestures and responses in the groups in which we work to avoid novelty and ensure that we maintain familiar patterns of relating. Therefore, I can now understand how anyone attempting to introduce novel gestures and responses could easily find themselves being ignored or even resisted.

If we take up this way of thinking about individuals and groups then our involvement in groups inevitably has the potential to provoke inclusion and exclusion, creating conflict and the potential for feelings of shame as the individually felt affect of the dialectical social process. In this case, rather than seeking to organise groups in activities that remove or minimise the potential for conflict and shame in pursuit of harmony and a sense of transcendence or wholeness (which is the usual pursuit of team away-days when looked at from the perspective of a humanistic psychology and was the hope for our away-day, as stated by Barbara), it seems to me that if it is our intention to learn and to change how we relate to each other in groups, then it is important that in attempting to understand our participating together that we are able to deal reflexively with and discuss such feelings as they arise in the social processes of us acting together in groups. Or as Stacey (2012, p89) puts it, “Thinking together about what we are doing and why we are doing it seems to me to be the only way to produce reasonable and lasting changes in what we do”.

In this doctoral programme, when I was confronted with the idea that my facilitation practice was infantilizing, working in this reflexive way in staying with my own feelings of shame and struggling to understand and learn through the experience, has enabled me to continue my research into my practice and develop new ways of thinking about it. At the same time, I felt isolated and undermined by feeling that what I thought I had known had been in some way false.

In attempting to use these differing perspectives to understand what was going on in the away-day with these directors it seems clear to me that the working assumptions of the group belong to the perspective on groups defined by the humanistic and

individualistic perspectives. This is revealed by Barbara as the group leader in her desire for the away-day to enable the group, through a form of confessional process, to reach for a form of alignment through which they can transcend the individual and attain a state where they represent the kind of supra individual, as described by Rogers (1951, p288). It is possible that the nervous remarks of Sharon and Barbara at the beginning of the away-day were responding to this as a perceived possibility. It is also interesting that the group's response to my attempts to discuss their remarks at the beginning of the day, and my offer of picking up the mythical nature of the discussion, resulted in a minimisation and dismissal of their importance, perhaps to avoid any new patterns of behaviour emerging and thereby negating the risk of any feelings of shame. Mead (1934, p179) describes how in the conversation of gesture and response an individual takes the attitude of the other towards his or her own stimulus. If we take up the complex responsive processes perspective and see shame as the individually felt affect of changing group dynamics and we take up the idea of an individual taking the attitude of the other in his own stimulus, then in a social situation where the potential for shame is present it must be shared by others in the group. Therefore, it must be that we were all complicit in maintaining the patterns of relating to which we had become accustomed, perhaps to avoid the ensuing challenges to our sense of identity and our inclusion in the group.

I am led to wonder whether the planning that Barbara and I were engaged in was influenced by our mutual imagining of the potential processes of shame such an away-day may provoke. Our planning of the away-day was, in some way, an effort to reduce or negate such feelings for the other participants and for ourselves (evidenced by Barbara holding back the agenda for the day) and yet at the same time wanting to have sufficient possibility of these processes being present to have the potential for transformational learning to take place on the day. In short, wanting to have our cake and eat it in trying to predict and manage the feelings of shame that might be provoked and in doing so attempting to instrumentalise that shame in our planning of the day. Furthermore, our deployment of anonymised tools such as three hundred and sixty degree feedback mechanisms, decontextualized behavioural competency frameworks and psychological instruments such as MBTI, may be offering the potential for understanding oneself in a formulaic and known way that minimises the

potential for the emergence of the individually felt experience of the affect of shame and the social losses that could ensue.

As I have said earlier in this project, within the community of people working on this doctoral programme with whom I shared my work, some have pointed to the potential for the work with the balloon to lead to infantilisation of the group. It is interesting to note that the use of a balloon was accidental in that the initial idea of a ball, and then a blow-up globe, became unfeasible. I think it's interesting because although the use of a child's toy such as a balloon may bring the potential for infantilisation into sharp focus, the processes of three sixty feedback tools and psychometric tools such as MBTI, through their foundations and generalizability appearing unchallengeable, and tight facilitator led processes involving flip-charts, posters and balloons, are also fundamentally designed to produce dependence upon the facilitator in such group meetings as a defence against anxiety rather than the rational analytical tools they appear to be. Using planned agendas, and these tools and techniques, the facilitator, in this case me, in collusion with the leader, in this case Barbara, can maintain a position of power in the group and the group and the facilitator co-create a dynamic of dependence from the group on the facilitator. The dependent dynamic of such facilitator led meetings could therefore easily be interpreted as infantilising in its very nature whilst purporting to be about encouraging participation and transformation. It would seem such infantilizing practices are common with Mowles (2007 and 2009) describing the use of pipe cleaners, Play-Doh, balloons and bits of cardboard, as well as very strict facilitator led rules in meetings, intended to support people to come together to create organisational strategy. Crewe (2014) also points to the use of coloured stickers, post-it notes and flip chart paper in what she describes as rituals of visioning the future in international development organisations. I'm drawn to the moment of clarity and realisation I had in the midst of the MBTI part of the away-day when I experienced myself acting as if I was a teacher directing errant pupils as a moment that clearly demonstrates the power dynamics between me as the facilitator and the rest of the group. However, this power would seem to be limited to maintaining the reiteration of expected patterns of relating within the social object of facilitation. When I made attempts at changing the pattern of the conversation through noticing the pattern (an example would be the use of mythical language) and inviting

conversation about it, the group dismissed this by pausing and then ignoring it and carrying on with their previous conversation.

What I'm coming to realise is that the way the day was planned, and the assumptions that Barbara and I were making in such planning, were ultimately denying others the opportunity to participate in how the day would proceed. And yet it seems that their expectation of Barbara providing an agenda for the day, their outward acceptance of the agenda and their passive participation on the day, would suggest that they wanted and expected such planning and forming of an agenda to take place. If the balloon, or perhaps even the away-day as a whole, in its planning and the way it transpired on the day, was in any way infantilising, maybe such infantilisation is an emergent property of the gestures and responses of me, Barbara and the rest of the group as we engaged in the social object of facilitation. In generating the need to be open to the feelings of shame in order to engage in transformational learning and yet also working unconsciously together with the highly ritualized processes, tools and techniques of cognitivist psychology and strategic choice theory to minimise or eliminate any opportunities for such shame to arise, we co-created a situation of both wanting and not wanting transformation and change at the same time with a repetitive pattern of interaction where compliance with such processes is expected. If, as has been suggested by those who have read this paper in its numerous iterations, the experience of facilitated team away-days is a common one, then such repetitive patterns of relating in avoidance of shame must also be common. In support of my contention that such repetitive patterns are a common experience, Mowles (2009), through his experience as a consultant facilitator describes a similar dynamic to the one I have shown here. He depicts a group resisting his attempts to change the expected dynamic of meeting, together with a pre-prepared agenda with specific intended outcomes to a more exploratory and emergent way of working, even to the point of criticizing his capability as a facilitator in suggesting that he wasn't in control of the workshop. When he proposed to his contractor that this criticism should form part of the workshop conversation he was prevented from doing so with the contractor reasoning that it would be unfair as the participants were unaccustomed to reflecting on their actions. Mowles argues that to reflect together on our actions in an authentic sense requires us to recognise each other and in doing so risks the inevitable change in our own sense of self. As I have argued in this paper, it is this reflecting on our acting

together and the unknown impact on our own sense of self of that reflecting that causes the potential for the occurrence of feelings of shame. Mowles (ibid) further argues that facilitation is a form of temporary leadership in which there is an ethical challenge in the junctures of negotiation,

The ethical and performative challenge for the consultant seems to me to reside in these junctures of negotiation, where we have a genuine opportunity for the recognition of others and alternative understanding of what is possible. The difference that I think a consultant can bring is to exercise a temporary form of leadership by taking part in, and encouraging negotiation as way of helping permanent members of staff to see each other anew (ibid, p291).

He argues that consultants through reflecting on their practice and developing theories about it can develop a better sense of self and through this better developed sense of self they are able, paradoxically, to have a more authentic exchange with others. In my recent experience, and in my work on this project, I have been reflecting on my practice as a facilitator and in doing so I have recognized myself in my own practice and in my participation in groups with others. I have demonstrated how with the use of tools and techniques of cognitivist psychology and strategic choice theory it is easy to collude with groups in the avoidance of mutual recognition and the inevitably ensuing shame. I am in agreement with Mowles (2009) in that this is the ethical and performative challenge that I face as I continue to practice as a facilitator. It is in the continued negotiation of my practice with others in the organisation that this challenge will continue to play out.

What Next?

In thinking about how I might proceed in project three I am drawn to looking for opportunities to research into instances where I and others may be unconsciously, or maybe even consciously, colluding with each other through making assumptions about what we are doing and why we are doing it. The work of Mead in his description of social objects, along with Fleck's (1979) ideas on thought collectives and thought styles, has prompted me to wonder how in the environment of

international development, assumptions about how change comes about in organisational contexts have emerged and taken root. In the organisation where I work I have participated in a process of numerous management meetings, which have resulted in the production of a pictorial representation of a 'vision' of change. A change team is being assembled whose role will be to build a 'roadmap' to develop the vision into a deliverable plan. The change team is then expected to coordinate and facilitate this change process across the organisation to deliver this vision. Already, through my learning on this doctorate programme, I can see this description of a change process is awash with assumptions about how change takes place in organisations and how individuals and groups are able to participate in it. It is not yet clear what my role in this ongoing change process will be but given my new understanding of the type of collusion that can take place I am keen to notice how I and others respond to the challenges that will ensue.

Project Three: The Job Interview, Collusive Performances, Forming and Being Formed by Expectations and Assumptions.

Introduction

In project one I wrote about my experience of managing and being managed, and assumptions about power and control in organisations based on systems thinking and formative teleology, as described by Stacey et al. (2000). This led to my becoming aware of a collusion that takes place in the interactions between people in organisations that takes the form of leaders and those being led having expectations of being in control of future outcomes in situations of complexity where such control is impossible. In project two, in developing my theme I proposed that the social object of facilitation (a term I derive from Mead, 1938), involving tightly managed facilitator led processes, competency frameworks and psychometric instruments, often leads to collusion between the participants in facilitated events to retain familiar patterns of relating in the avoidance of the discomfort of shame, which is an inevitable aspect of shifting identities.

As I am increasingly describing what I am noticing in my experience at work as collusion, I think it's important that I set out more clearly what I mean. Alvesson and Spicer describe a phenomenon in organisations that they call functional stupidity which is characterised by an “unwillingness or inability to mobilise three aspects of cognitive capacity: reflexivity, justification, and substantive reasoning” (2012, p1199). That is to say that individuals do not reflexively question the norms, rules and routines of organisations that are then taken as given and true. Neither do they look for justification of why things are done the way they are, and instead, ways of working are merely accepted. In avoidance of substantive reasoning people will narrow their focus on delivering specific outputs without any further questioning of the validity of those outputs. Alvesson and Spicer describe such behaviour as functional stupidity and its function is to create certainty for people and reduce anxiety. They also suggest that functional stupidity can result in promotion, pay rises and smooth organisational performance. They point out that the danger of such functional stupidity is that risks to the organisation are not appropriately anticipated

and significant problems can arise without being noticed or attended to. I would suggest that what I am describing as collusion is similar to the phenomenon of functional stupidity as described here. Collusion is a social phenomenon in which patterns of relating emerge as interdependent people interact with one another to maintain their ways of being together. It is important to point out that I am proposing that such collusion takes place without prior discussion or planning by those involved, and may also be outside of their awareness, and so is different from what one would understand as deliberate cooperation or conspiracy. However, I would argue that in common with functional stupidity, such collusion has the function of giving certainty and predictability to those colluding, and reduces their anxiety. Such collusion may well involve limitation of reflexivity, the absence of pursuit of justification and inhibited substantive reasoning.

I have become increasingly curious about different forms of collusion and whether the situations described in projects one and two are substantively different from collusion in job interviews. If they are, then I intend to investigate how and why the differences occur.

What follows is a narrative of my experience of applying for a new job in my organisation.

Applying for a New Job

A job as the head of a corporate change team was advertised in the organisation where I work. This job had come about through the creation of a corporate vision that involved a number of meetings of senior managers across the organisation. This vision incorporated intentions for the organisation to be globally networked, digitally enabled and financially resilient.

The job description described the role as: “A two year (fixed term) appointment to coordinate and facilitate an organisational wide change process that will enable the organisation to transform the way it operates in order to significantly scale up its impact on poverty eradication”. I applied for the role because it was better

remunerated than the job I was doing and it would allow me to work across the organisation in a leading change role. I felt excited and nervous about the possibility of doing it. The application process involved completing an online form and the main part of the application asked for examples from the applicant's experience set against the organisation's competency framework. I went on to fill out the form and later I was pleased to be invited to interview.

In the days running up to the interview I prepared myself by brushing up on the detail of what was being called Vision 2020 which set out the intentions for changing the organisation. I frequently found myself wondering what questions I might be asked at interview and how I might respond. In private conversations with myself, I imagined the voices of both Michael and Barbara asking me questions, as I knew that they would be both on the interview panel. I also found myself wondering what I would do if I didn't get the job. What might I say to colleagues, family and friends? At one point I thought that it would prompt me to move to a different organisation and I even made a flurry of online applications for other jobs. I openly discussed the job with others in my organisation and beyond and the fact that I had made an application. I was interested in who I was competing against but secrecy surrounded the applications and shortlisting. Every time I had one of these discussions I would get a spike of adrenaline and I would feel physically shaken. By the time of the interview I was in a high state of anticipatory excitement and nervousness.

The Day of the Interview

The day of the interview arrived. I had put a lot of thought into what I might wear for the interview: should I wear my usual work attire of open necked shirt and trousers? Certainly, anything more casual seemed inappropriate. Or should I make a special effort and wear a suit with a shirt and tie? I decided to wear a suit and tie. This seemed to be the safest option as I imagined the panel may make unwanted meaning of anything more casual. I had my suit cleaned, I polished my shoes and off I went for the interview. It struck me later that the only other time I've put so much thought into what to wear was when attending weddings and funerals that are similar rituals in the

sense that they interrupt everyday processes in which clothes can have symbolic meaning.

I arrived ten minutes early and waited at my desk to be escorted by an administrative assistant to a room where I was given the subject of the ten-minute presentation I was to give at the beginning of the interview. I found it strange that I was being escorted around a building where I work every week and in which I'm free to roam around at will under non-interview circumstances. On reflection what I think I was finding strange was the highly stylized way I, and others, were acting in response to the fact that this was a formal interview situation in which I became a temporary outsider. The quality of my interactions with others was markedly changed. Being escorted was a process of gesture and response that was emerging as a pattern between me and the administrative assistant in responding to our perceptions of what it means to be involved in a formal job interview. In cooperating with being led around in this way I was already colluding in an artificial suspension of my everyday identity.

I was given forty-five minutes to prepare and the room contained a table and chairs, flipchart paper, coloured pens, and writing paper. The presentation subject was as follows:

“Vision 2020 anticipates a very ambitious period of transformational change for the organisation in the way that it manages and delivers its work in the future. As you consider the planning and implementation of the change programme that will be necessary to deliver this scale of transformation :-

- *What do you envisage its shape and complexity to be?*
- *Who do you see as the main stakeholder groups we must be mindful of in designing and delivering this change and why?*
- *What do you see are the critical key streams of work that are required to support it?*
- *How do you see the chief interdependencies, relative importance and sequencing?”*

As I set about preparing a presentation I was aware of what I had been learning from my research on this doctoral programme. In the questions there were a number of indications of a taken for granted view that transformational change could be designed and delivered according to a preformed plan and that relationships could also be managed through stakeholder management. I was, and remain, sceptical about the ability for managers being able to manage change in such a way but I also thought that to challenge such thinking at an interview may well be the best way of ensuring that I didn't get the job. In my previous conversations with Michael and Barbara I had noticed how much faith they put into such planning and risk management and I imagined that anything I said that might cast doubt on that faith and may have caused them to respond to me negatively as a candidate. I note a contradiction here. I was being interviewed for a job as head of corporate change in which I would be expected to bring innovation and yet I was also sensing that to be too different would be threatening to their assumptions about how change comes about in organisations.

I set about preparing a presentation that described a combination of planned and managed change using a well-recognised project management approach alongside a more emergent appreciation of change over time, where a process of regular reflection is required to understand progress so far and adjustments to actions to keep the change on course. I also referred to the need for a second order form of reflection to consider whether the change we were aiming for was still appropriate. I went on to explain how I would construct a process to report progress to senior managers and board members. In what I was proposing there is a clear reflection of what Mintzberg (1987) describes as a deliberately emergent strategy in that there would be an overall set of guidelines and processes in which managers would be free to interpret those guidelines and develop content as they see fit. Senior managers are then able to guide such a process by stopping any plans that are deemed unhelpful and others, that are deemed helpful, can be incorporated into the formal strategy. The assumption underpinning this proposition is that emergence can be harnessed within a strategy in which managers can still assert overall control. Whilst I don't share this assumption, my proposition was based on how much I sensed that I could move away from ideas that suggest that one can manage change in a deliberate and planned way and still be recognised as a good candidate for the job.

After forty-five minutes of preparation the same person who had escorted me to the room arrived to escort me to the interview and so the 'out of the ordinary' quality of my experience was maintained. The interview began with a short round of introductions, as I hadn't met the third member of the panel who was a member of the board named Pamela. I was then invited to give my presentation. I used Venn diagrams and graphs with Cartesian coordinates to denote tasks delivered over time to show how I proposed to manage change. I explained that I felt that any plan needed to be flexible enough to change according to how people were responding to it. I talked about Bolman and Deals' (2003) idea about culture and complexity, that the consequences of action – seen clearly if striking tightly packed billiard balls – was unknowable and particularly so when dealing with humans rather than objects. By doing this I think I was trying to act ethically given how my thinking has been changed by my work on this doctoral programme. By which I mean that my appreciation of complexity has led to me being very sceptical about the predictability of outcomes involving interactions between many people.

After my presentation there followed a number of questions relating to it. The question I remember most clearly was from Pamela who asked me what I thought the biggest challenge to the change was. I remember replying that I thought that it would be ourselves, that when things became difficult or challenging as the changes progressed, would the senior team and the board be able to continue with the change? I think what I was pointing to here was my recognition that unpredictability and ambiguity often lead to people feeling anxious and the change that was being proposed would inevitably lead to an increase in ambiguity for those involved. The rest of the interview was a series of requests from the interview panel for examples from my previous work experience set against the chosen competencies. In my application form and in the interview, I chose to give examples that showed me as being capable of managing large-scale change programmes. I chose examples from my work in the UK Border Agency and in the Prison Service when I had led or played a large part in leading such change. In the telling of the story of my experiences I minimised the problems that had occurred in my previous work except where I could demonstrate how my actions had solved the problems. I also told the stories as if it were my actions or my leadership that had caused the successful completion of the work. I did this because I had been in interview situations where applicants had not

been successful because they could not demonstrate their positive personal impact. Barbara specifically asked what role I had played in these examples I was giving and I said that I had played a programme leadership role, which was true in that my job title was indicative of programme leadership, but I was aware of giving the impression that I was individually delivering the work rather than it being a collaborative effort of lots of people, which is how I really thought about it. I felt that any other answer would have reduced my chances of getting the job. In all of my conversations I have gotten a strong sense that they were looking for a project leader and in my application and my interview I tried to talk about myself in a way that give that impression. I wasn't lying as such, because I had indeed led change programmes in the way I was describing. It was more that I was aware that I was choosing to emphasise my actions, and diminishing those of others, according to what I was perceiving that the interview panel wanted. The interview ended with me being given a chance to ask any questions I might have. I explained that as I had been close to how the job had been created I didn't need to clarify anything. What I was feeling was that this seemed like one of those questions that have to be asked of all candidates where, as interviewers, we ask it without really thinking about why. I was thanked for taking part in the interview and I was shown out of the room. I later found out that I had been successful and was offered the job.

Making Sense of my Interview Experience

In this narrative I am clearly colluding with what I perceive to be the expectations of Barbara and Michael. I feel that if I had been completely open about my views in my interview I would stand no chance of getting the job and therefore limit my own influence in the ongoing change process and earn less money. In this collusion, if I had said things that I think aren't necessarily true, I would be challenged by my own measurement of what I deem to be ethical behaviour. I found myself trying to walk a line of being ethical and telling the interview panel what I thought they wanted to hear. I was attempting to sense what the interviewers were expecting in my answers and adapting my responses accordingly. Whilst never saying anything that was untrue I was choosing what to emphasise or not as I told stories about what I had done in the past.

The interview process went much as I expected and matched my experience of both interviewing and being interviewed. Whilst the actual detail of the conversation could not be predicted, the pattern of the process of panel questions followed by candidate answer – where the expectation is to explain what one has done previously and why it was successful because of your actions – was very familiar from my work in this NGO organisation and in the UK public sector. I felt unable to have the type of conversation I would have liked to have had with the interview panel because it would have meant me challenging the interview process and perhaps endangering the panel's ability to make what they would probably describe as a fair and equitable comparison of my ability with that of the other applicants. As a consequence, I was having to make choices about what I could and couldn't say and still be considered a suitable candidate for the job. The process is fundamentally individualistic in that it wholly focuses on the actions of the individual applicant as if their historical performance was in isolation from their interactions with others. Assumptions of strategic choice theory and systems thinking necessitate the reduction of humans to individual objects of economic production. Honneth describes this reduction as the reification of people in which “selective interpretation of social facts can significantly reduce our attentiveness for meaningful circumstances in a given situation” (2005, p131). This helps me understand the suspension of my everyday identity in my experience of being escorted around the building. It is almost as if I cease to be the ‘me’ that everyone knows and works with and instead become a faceless applicant for the job. An explanation for this may be that it is important for those making the decision, as they are able to make claims of fairness in their judgment of my performance at interview against others who they may not know as well. As a consequence, I felt it necessary to collude with this way of relating for the process to continue as expected. I refer to this as collusion because the process of relating is not formally pre-agreed or previously discussed, rather it has emerged from what people have interpreted as the appropriate way of conducting interviews at this particular organisation.

After the announcement I received a number of congratulatory messages, including messages from unsuccessful applicants. It is clear that in these processes there are winners and losers. The stakes seem to be high for how our identities and

relationships are affected by the results of such processes. I think the stakes are almost as high for those that are doing the interviewing. They are making high profile and very visible choices in offering this job to me. Both Michael and Barbara have publicly stated how important this Vision 2020 change process is to them and they are both known to have been instrumental in its construction. As the successful applicant for this job I will play an important part in how the changes proceed and therefore by extension the responsibility for my success, or indeed my failure, in my future endeavours also reflects on Michael and Barbara. When the decision to give me the job was announced in an organisational newsletter the wording of the announcement was very carefully put together between Michael and Barbara. The text they chose made significant reference to my previous experience that I had put forward in the interview and that I had successfully led large-scale change in various other organisations. When changes to this text were suggested, Barbara was very clear that these references to my experience must remain. My interpretation of this was that it was a kind of public justification for her decision as well as a bid for why people should take me seriously in my new job, as others' view of me will be important in my performance in this new role. The high stakes for all involved is perhaps an explanation for how they were behaving and why I felt I had to collude with them and the whole process before, during and after the interview.

How job interviews are Described in my Organisation and the Underlying Assumptions

At the organisation where I work there is a lot of guidance and policy on what to do when you are a manager intending to conduct job interviews to select a new member of staff. The guidance states that the process needs to support the organisation's commitment to ensuring a diverse workforce and should be, transparent, timely, cost-effective, equitable, and free from conflict of interest. The guidance goes on to suggest that if interviews are conducted in an unstructured way by untrained individuals they are likely to have very poor predictive validity and that in order to have any value they (interviews) should always be conducted by trained panel members (that is to say those that have learned the rules of the process), structured to

follow a previously agreed set of questions and exploring the various competencies the individual brings to the organisation which are essential to the role.

The guidance also argues that presentations are a useful tool to gauge the level of understanding a candidate has of the role and to support the interviewers in exploring ideas and skills the candidate could bring to the role. Because of this guidance the process of the job interview is a highly organised set piece event underpinned by assumptions drawn from a cognitivist and realist perspective whereby job applicants are deemed to possess skill sets that can be revealed through questioning. There is also the assumption drawn from strategic choice theory that takes for granted that organisations are systems where the future state can be designed for optimal and predictable outcomes. Strategies are chosen as to their acceptability, feasibility and suitability or fit (Stacey, 2007). In such thinking people and their skill sets are considered a resource for, or input into, the organisational system and are selected in the same way. People's capabilities are analysed through testing and consideration of past performance. These capabilities are then considered alongside the organisation's competency frameworks that set out the various behaviours and competencies those who have designed the strategy deem appropriate to deliver it. In this way people are considered as individual objects of economic production for organisations (we can see this in the almost ubiquitous use of the term 'Human Resources' to identify the teams who work to produce and manage the policies and processes that dictate how people get into and out of the organisation and how they should act when they are there). These interviews will often involve the use of competency frameworks, psychometric tests and other presentational tests intended to draw out and understand the capabilities of individual job applicants.

The guidance described above is drawn from literature such as Anderson and Shackleton (1993). They suggest that common weaknesses of interviews are; interviewers may ask questions designed to confirm initial impressions of candidates gained either before the interview or in its early stages; interviewers sometimes assume that particular characteristics are typical of members of a particular group; interviewers rate candidates as 'good' or 'bad' in some aspects, and then replicate this judgement across the board, reaching unbalanced decisions; interviewers can allow the experience of interviewing one candidate to affect the way they interview others

who are seen later in the selection process; interviewers sometimes give preference to candidates they perceive as having a similar background, career history, personality or attitudes to themselves; and interviewers may make decisions on the basis of whether they personally like or dislike the candidate.

They suggest that structuring the interview can help improve the ability to predict performance in the job and that a growing number of employers take this approach. A structured interview means that; questions are planned carefully before the interview; all candidates are asked the same questions; answers are scored using a rating system; and questions focus on the attributes and behaviours needed in the job.

Asking the same questions of all candidates is likely to be in support of the idea of being able to compare and contrast the answers from each candidate and, therefore, make an objective judgement based on that analysis as to which candidate will perform best in the job in the future. However, in suggesting that interviewers ask all candidates the same questions it is inevitable that such interviews will follow a set pattern as determined by the interviewers, thus constraining the conversation between the interviewee and the interviewers. Also, because each candidate is different, the same question will necessarily have a different meaning for each person, leading to a necessarily different interaction. As a consequence, the intended aim of consistency or standardization of the interviews becomes impossible and meaningless. That is to say that the aim of obtaining standardized and comparable responses from all candidates to compare and contrast them is impossible because each individual candidate can only respond from their own unique experience and perspective. In addition, an individual's future performance must also depend on the nature of how that individual and many others relate to each other in getting the work done and yet there is no reference to such interdependence.

The guidance on job interviewing described above is more or less common to all of the organisations in which I have worked in the UK in both the public and third sector. However, I find the abstracted impression that these interviews give of a method of standardizing responses from candidates, as if it is comparable evidence, highly problematic. In many discussions about the interview process with colleagues over the years I have noticed people expressing concern that the formulaic way in

which interviews are conducted enables those being interviewed to perform well at interview by learning the rules of interviewing and that such a good performance does not mean that they are the best person for the job. I note here that even though people can call the process into question there remains a belief that it is possible, if we could only get the process right, to predict an individual's future performance and select the right person for the job.

Notions of Rationality and Bias Against Bias in Literature on Job Interviews

A simple search for literature relating to job interviews produces a plethora of results relating to different aspects of the interview process. Much of the literature is in the shape of advice on how best to prepare for and perform at interview to successfully get the job for which you are applying, or advice for employers in finding the right employee. It will often take the form of an explication of some research and then in extrapolating that research, an offer of advice to interviewees or interviewers, usually as a number of steps to be followed to improve the chances of successful employment. Barnett (2008) offers a typical example of such literature in which employers are given five steps of advice for achieving successful outcomes in interviews. These steps include reversing the process to give an applicant an opportunity to learn about the organisation rather than the interviewer interrogating the applicant; predefining the capabilities you are looking for and designing tests to enable the applicant to demonstrate those capabilities; using psychometrics as they “provide objective, scientific data about a candidate and can help to predict how that person will perform in a given situation” (ibid, p39); and including research tasks in the interview process which are described as an opportunity for applicants to demonstrate how well they can research a topic and communicate their findings. Step five is to assimilate the four previous steps into a selection centre to rigorously explore candidate's capabilities to find the right candidate for the job. Tremayne et al (2007) describe a preparation day to support nurses in job applications. The preparation day consists of a combination of teaching nurses the theory of job interviewing aimed at underpinning the background, process and decision-making skills used when interviewing and enhancing the student's knowledge and understanding of the process and its associated complexities and the acting out of

interview scenarios with a selection of different types of candidates being demonstrated by the teachers. Derous et al (2016) offer a theoretical framework in relation to interviews using dual process theory that “proposes that humans can be rational information processors, but are also fallible human beings whose decision-making processes are influenced by heuristics and biases” (ibid, p91). In doing this they are suggesting that rational decisions are those that are made without the involvement of people’s feelings and preferences.

A common theme of this literature is that bias against job applicants’ physical or perceived behavioural attributes on the part of the interviewer is unhelpful in objective decision making. That is to say, decisions that have overcome or set aside any potential bias of the interviewer are perceived as desirable and more likely to result in the successful employment of the ‘right’ candidate. That a ‘right’ candidate exists is a common assumption and, as explained above, much of it is in the shape of advice to employers in creating complicated processes to find this candidate and advice to applicants about how to give a successful performance at interview to persuade the employer that they are that applicant. In addition, increasing expectations of equal opportunities in society have subsequently been taken into UK law that then requires competition for jobs to be open to all. This has placed those doing the interviewing in the position of having to demonstrate that all candidates receive the same treatment.

If we take up this way of thinking it is important that any factors such as unconscious bias that will get in the way of such a selection are designed out of the process. Underlying how people see decision-making in circumstances such as choosing someone to do a job using an interview process are two ways to understand the meaning of rationality. Stacey (2007, p151-152) points out that it is important to distinguish between a technical mode of rationality in which gathering the facts, generating options and making choices that satisfy the objective, and the second view of rationality that is about making decisions and acting in a way that seems sensible given the observable reality of the circumstances. In the former, irrationality is considered to be the making of judgments that cannot be substantiated by testing of objective facts, whereas in the latter, irrationality is making judgments and behaving in a way that is based on fantasy. This second sense of rationality allows for the

involvement of emotion, ideology and cultural influences in decision-making whereas the first form of rationality does not. It is this former notion of rationality that I am suggesting is influencing the literature on job interviews that I have been describing. From the position of the human resource literature that I have been describing, the latter form of rationality would be deemed flawed, or perhaps even irrational, as it involves emotion and changeable cultural influences.

As I have described in my narrative, I believe that emotion was an inevitable part of the job interview for me and I would argue that it would be impossible for anyone to be in any way separate from their emotional responses (although I recognise that people can be more or less aware of their own emotions). As Vedeler (2014) points out when describing the experiences of disabled job applicants at interview, emotional responses, such as anger in some instances, are present as people relate to each other in these high stakes situations. Vedeler argues that there are three kinds of story from the disabled person's perspective that are discrimination, uncertainty and recognition. In arguing this position she puts these stories on a spectrum with discrimination and recognition at either end. Where discrimination occurs, applicants are seen as a disabled person rather than as individuals whereas recognition involves an assessment of the competence of the individual applicant. This provides an interesting point in that disabled candidates feel more recognized when their disability is set aside giving an indication as to the importance of treating applicants equally. Additionally, an interviewer's ability to argue that they have not discriminated against someone with a disability is important given that it is illegal to do so. Williamson et al (1997) indicate that structured interviews are more likely to be defensible in court. If one takes the view that the validity of a job interview can be tested through how well the applicant performs in the job then there is also evidence that structured interviews are more valid than unstructured ones (Conway et al., 1995; Huffcutt & Arthur, 1994; Huffcutt & Woehr, 1999; Posthuma et al., 2002). Whilst I do not agree with this view, it may well be part of the commonly held cognitive and individualistic assumptions of employers. It is hardly surprising then that they would choose to structure their interview processes.

Riviera (2012) looking at what she called elite firms suggests that the cultural background of interviewers and interviewees are also important in interview

situations with the suggestion that employers are more likely to hire job candidates with similar backgrounds to themselves. Judge and Higgins (2000) in their review of literature on job interviewers also found that similarity to the interviewer is an important factor for interviewees in getting the job with interviewers showing bias towards those most like themselves. Judge and Higgins (*ibid*, pp390-391) and Delery and Kacmar (1998) discuss something they call impression management as being a mediating factor in interviews. They describe this as being what an interviewee will do and say in an interview to give a favourable impression of themselves. Actions such as: entitlement – where an individual will take credit for past outcomes; enhancements – when someone attempts to persuade the interviewer of some positive or admirable qualities; and self promotion – when the applicant wants the interviewer to believe that they have a particularly high level of skill or ability that the interviewer is looking for. The authors describe impression management actions as tactics and whilst they recognise that an interview is a social process, they describe interactions between interviewers and interviewees as a process of sender-receiver communication in which individuals are choosing what to do and say to manage the impression they are making on others. In considering the description of what I was doing in my narrative it could be described as impression management. There is no doubt that I wanted to make a favourable impression, surely to do otherwise when one is being interviewed for a job that one has applied for would be strange. However, it seems to me that how my and others' actions were emerging in the interview process is much more complex than the description given here of impression management.

Lunenburg (2010) recognizes the importance of the job interview as a selection process and suggests that the interview has a disproportionate amount of influence on hiring decisions given that, contrary to Conway et al., (1995); Huffcutt & Arthur, (1994); Huffcutt & Woehr, (1999); Posthuma et al., (2002), he suggests the job interview is a poor predictor of future performance of those hired.

There is no doubt then that job interviews are very important in the decisions about who gets employed. The structuring of interview processes has emerged from the threat of legal challenge, well-intentioned attempts to remove bias against such things as race and disability, as well as an ongoing response to research into organisational psychology. Stacey (1997, pp152-153) suggests that human perception inevitably

involves interpretation and people cannot decide using a purely technically rational mode. As I reflect on my own experience I'm inclined to agree. I would further argue that assumptions that deciding in that way is possible have led to the emergence of a highly ordered and ritualized interview process that has resulted in restrictions as to what feels desirable, or even possible, in the job interview scenario for everyone involved.

I am going to go on to suggest that interviews could be understood as performances in which the protagonists collude with one another in job interviews to maintain expected patterns of relating rather than them being the application of a technically rational process of employee selection.

Interviews as Collusive Performances

Irvine Goffman (1959) describes a process whereby individuals enter into a situation in which they interact with each other and put forward a partial projection of themselves. In doing so they set up a pattern of relating in which these projections must be maintained by all of the people involved. Not to maintain such a projection would risk the occurrence of what he calls a disruptive event that would cause the interaction to come to a confused and embarrassed halt and, consequently, the participants would find themselves in a situation and set of interactions that no longer fit with their definition of what was expected to happen. He goes on to say that the cause of this move away from the expected becomes situated in the individual who fails to maintain the expected projection of themselves resulting in the potential for that individual to feel shame and others to feel uncomfortable and hostile towards that individual (ibid, pp23-24).

When we are in situations where we find ourselves relating to others, it seems that there is a form of performance going on in which we all collude in our participation, to avoid the discomfort of such disruptive events. Goffman's description of these interactions that he describes as "minute social systems" has strong echoes for me of Mead's (1938) description of social objects that I described at length in project two, albeit I would suggest that Goffman is operating from assumptions of a systems

perspective in which interactions are between autonomous individuals in a bounded situation. For Mead, the social object is a situation where the actors are only able to take part if they can take the attitude of the other. In the case of the job interview, we can only be an interviewee if we can take the attitude of the interviewer and we can only be an interviewer if we can take the attitude of an interviewee. Mead suggests that in our interactions we engage through significant symbols. A symbol becomes significant when we call out in ourselves what we are calling out in others in an anticipatory and adaptive exchange. This means that we are creating the feeling in ourselves as a stimulus for how we want others to respond (Mead, 1934, pp71-72). In doing this we are taking the attitude of the other although given that we are all different, we could never feel exactly the same thing. Therefore, Mead is offering a more interdependent view of how people interact because for Mead the meaning of the gesture is in the response of the other. Mead's social object would go beyond that of only the interview situation, it would incorporate the interactions between people leading up to and after the interview, including in my case the application process, being escorted to and from the interview room and the announcement of the results of the interviews afterwards.

It appears then that there are some situations in which we participate where the expectations of what we are to do seem predefined. I am proposing that such a situation is the job interview, especially where interviews are structured the way I have described earlier. Prior to my interview I worked extensively with both Michael and Barbara, my interactions with them had become socially easy and friendly. However, in the interview situation and setting, the relationships between participants felt different. They were stilted, and characterized by a turn taking pattern where question followed answer and each interviewer participated in a seemingly predetermined manner. It was clear that the interviewers were following the guidance I have described above, and I imagined they were doing this in the belief that this was the best way to find out who should get the job whilst also following the rules.

Goffman describes well how this led me to feel, "When an actor takes on an established social role usually he finds that a particular front has already been established for it. Whether his acquisition of the role was primarily motivated by a desire to perform the given task or by a desire to maintain the corresponding front, the

actor will find that he must do both” (Goffman, 1959, p37). Goffman is pointing here to individuals playing roles within a given context for which they must adopt a particular front. By that I take his meaning to be that an individual will present a version of themselves that fits with the social system in Goffman’s terms, or the social object in Mead’s terms, in which he or she is engaged. The social object of the job interview is well established and the expectation of those involved is that the interviewee will play his or her part. This is perhaps something of an explanation as to why I felt unable to have the kind of exploratory conversation that I wanted with the interview panel, who held the power to manage how the interview should proceed. The front that I was expected to display had already been established and to fail to display that established front could have been perceived as a mis-performance and perhaps judged as such by the interview panel. This, given the high stakes of money and future work prospects I perceived were in play in my interview, was a risk I was unwilling or even perhaps unable to take. I say that I may have been unable to take it because of my experience of facilitating that I related in project two. In that example, when I attempted to change the dynamics of how we were relating together, there came a silence, a pause, during which it seemed people were unable to act, until someone said something or did something that brought us back into the expected and established ways of being together. As pointed out by Vedeler (2014), failure of the interviewee to do what is expected can lead to unpredictable emotional responses (in that case anger) from the interviewers.

Goffman (1959, p43) explains that in circumstances where an individual performs in their professional capacity the choices that contribute to their performance will be those choices that support the individual’s professional identity. In the case of my interview I was keen to offer a view of me to the panel that matched their expectations of a competent change manager and leader. It follows from Goffman’s theory that had I taken the risk of attempting to shift the conversation to move away from the established expectations of the job interview, then I may have risked being identified as incompetent. Whilst I am drawing on Goffman’s work in understanding my experience at a job interview and its distinctively structured set of expectations, behaving out of the norm of what is expected in many other social and work situations may also result in the risk of being judged negatively by others, such as the facilitation event I described in project two.

Goffman (1959, p80) uses the analogy of a wrestling match to describe how a relational process can be prescribed and obey pre-set rules and yet within that prescribed process there is expression and movement that does not come from the rules and needs to be improvised by those involved moment to moment. This seems to me to be the same phenomenon that I am describing that takes place in the job interview. The process in which the participants are acting is pre-set and tightly planned and yet it is necessary for those involved to improvise their specific gestures and responses to all play their part and present a version of themselves that suits the situation as it emerges. Goffman (1959) points to a necessary distance between the performer and the audience in that the performer is presenting a version of themselves with which the audience must collude. He suggests that the nature of this improvisation in specific contexts allows the performers space to decide for themselves what they choose to say and do. This enables each performer to decide for themselves what to include and what to leave out of their performance to present the partial version of themselves that they wish to convey. He further asserts that the audience, “in awe of the performer”, allows this partial performance through which the performer avoids any shame related to a fuller disclosure of themselves (ibid, p76). As I have argued in project two, shame is a social process and the anticipation of any shame is likely to be shared in the group. I would therefore add that even if there was awe of the performer, the felt potential for shame in the group is also a motivator for the audience to collude with the performer’s partial disclosure. This suggests that any collusion, or impression management, that is going on is not just about fulfilling individual interests, it is also about emotions and relationships. By this I mean that the emotion of shame is a social process and is felt in our relationships with others. The anticipation of the discomfort of shame for all involved is a strong motivation for collusion.

If we take up this idea in relation to the interview described in my narrative I would suggest that myself, Barbara, Michael and Pamela were all performers and audiences for each other at the same time. We were all presenting a version of ourselves that we deemed appropriate for the interview situation and other versions of our selves were necessarily concealed. As Goffman (1959) points out, should our performance be unsuccessful and other versions of ourselves were to be revealed we take the risk that

the expected process would not be followed with an ensuing risk of a sense of shame arising in one or more of us. This is very reminiscent of the description of the potential for shame arising from acting outside of expected interactions in the facilitated away-day that I described in project two. I would suggest that in this interview situation the stakes were even higher. The audience for our performance of a successful interview is not limited to the interviewers and me. The result will necessarily be communicated to others across the organisation who may also have a stake in who gets the job as it would affect their ongoing relationships with the applicants. Therefore, the panel and I are aware that our actions will be judged by others as to whether they were successful or not. This gives an explanation for Barbara's insistence that a description of my experience was a vital part of the announcement to the organisation that I was being given the job.

Simmel (1906) reinforces my understanding of how it is that when we enter into social interaction with others, we are able to take for granted certain aspects of those interactions. He describes how the objectification of culture has led to a situation whereby the level of knowledge about an individual needed in any given situation is limited by the known historical and traditional nature of the situation,

The modern merchant who enters into a transaction with another, the scholar who undertakes an investigation with another, the leader of a political party who makes an agreement with the leader of another party with reference to an election, or the handling of a proposed bill – all these with exceptions and modifications that need not be further indicated, know, with reference to their associates, precisely what it is necessary to know for the purposes of the relationship in question. The traditions and institutions, the force of public opinion, and the circumscription of the situation, which unavoidably prejudice the individual, are so fixed and reliable that one only needs to know certain externalities with reference to the other in order to have the confidence necessary for the associated action (Ibid, pp450-451).

As I've said previously, Goffman (1959) points to the need for participants to maintain an expected performance in such situations. Simmel explains that a mis-performance not only risks shame, it also casts doubt on that which was presumed

known, this then challenges all other previous assumptions about the mis-performing participant. The utility of a successful, by which I mean expected or even collusive, performance within the social object of the job interview by the interviewee as well as the interviewers becomes very clear. Referring to my own performance in the interview described in the narrative above, the risk I felt in any attempt I might have made to change the style or content of the interview conversation, was the risk of a mis-performance and the potential for the loss of trust in my competence. This held the potential for the accompanying discomfort of having failed in my attempt at achieving promotion in the hierarchy with the result of feeling exposed as inadequately skilled for the job and risking shame for all involved. It seems then that not colluding with expected performances in job interviews, and social situations generally, comes with some considerable risk.

So far in this section of the paper I have described the process of my job interview as being the complex interdependent performances of individuals. This resulted in a pattern of everyone involved behaving in the way they were expected to behave and doing as they were expected to because to not do so risked a mis-performance and a consequential breakdown of relationships between the participants, loss of trust between the participants and the potential for shame to arise in the group. This would also have risked me being deemed to be incompetent and not getting the job with the loss of the resultant increased income and status.

Whilst I've found the work of Goffman and Simmel to be useful in understanding how the interplay of the participants in the interview could be seen as a form of performance I also found their explanation to be limited in that neither of them have helped me understand the history of how the process of the job interview has come about. As I described earlier it seems that organisations in attempting to contain bias and discrimination from job interviews and responding to the threat of legal challenge as a result of any discrimination have, over time, developed very tightly structured interview processes. Historically, and in situations where these processes had not yet developed, jobs would have simply been given on the basis of pre-existing relationships through social networks, friendships or family contacts. I would suggest that to understand the nature of our collusion more fully we need to look carefully at how the traditions, norms and rules that shape that collusion have come about.

The Importance of History in the Emergence of Knowledge and Truth

Norbert Elias' description of a civilizing process (Elias, 2000) is helpful in explaining how our perceptions of what is appropriate change over time. Elias describes a process that took place in French society over many years in which behaviour and in turn identities changed as small societies became larger and eventually nation states were formed. In this process, differentiation of individual contributions to society took place and the level of interdependence was vastly increased. In turn, it was no longer acceptable for people to settle differences through violence and processes of law emerged through which use of violence was monopolized by the state. In this process, as individuals were born into this ever more complex and interdependent society, how to behave in the society gets taken for granted. Changes took place over time so that human functions relating to sexual reproduction and defecation that used to be acceptable in public were no longer so and were restricted to being performed in private within the family home. Elias describes how as people grew up in French society, these behavioural expectations became part of their identity. People learned who they were through their experience of growing up and acting into the situations they found themselves in, with the ensuing feelings of displeasure, shame and disgust as regulating factors of their behaviour (ibid, pp108-109).

Elias is giving us an explanation here as to how over time we take as part of our own sense of self the expectations of society as to how we should behave. In the UK, what we now know as human resource functions grew out of increasing numbers of women entering the workplace during two world wars and the development of rules and regulations that were intended to morally protect women and children at work. By 1945 the term personnel management had started to be used as employment policies began to be seen as influencing factors in productivity and output for organisations. The emerging profession of personnel management was seen as a bureaucratic one in developing and implementing such policies. In the 1960s and 1970s personnel techniques were developed which took up ideas from social sciences looking at motivation and organisational behaviour and specialisms began to develop alongside increasing uses of selection testing. Around the mid 1980s the term 'human resource

management' arrived from the USA with the term human resources suggesting that people were an asset or resource for organisations, as if they were machines (CIPD, 2016).

It is from this increasing bureaucracy, and the taking up of assumptions from strategic choice theory and research in the social sciences, that the method of conducting job interviews has emerged. What I am taking from Elias is that over time assumptions such as thinking of people possessing cognitive skillsets, and as resources and assets of organisations, have been taken for granted and people coming into the HR profession unquestioningly accept them as true. They eventually form part of their identity as HR professionals. The HR professionals then design the interview structure and process that gets used by interviewers. This forms expectations as to how things should be done. Consequently, when people act outside of these expectations they not only risk the judgement of others but also a negative judgement from themselves towards themselves. In this way expectations of how people relate to each other and themselves emerge from their ongoing interaction. I propose that this is what is going on in the context of a job interview. Over time the way of doing interviews has become relatively fixed and to conduct interviews all involved must collude with one another in the rituals, rules and norms that govern them. To not do so risks us judging ourselves as well as others judging us. This again could lead to the experience of shame for those involved much in the way that I have described shame arising in groups in project two.

Using the work of Elias, I am attempting to show how the highly ritualized process of the job interview as I experienced it in my narrative has come about. Over time, through processes of people relating to each other, patterns have arisen which have then been formalized into rules, advice and guidance of the sort I have described earlier. Those of us coming to the interview process at a later stage have no knowledge of the particular contexts that brought about these rules and advice, although as a social object we are very familiar with it. We must make our way through each situation by interpreting the rules, both formal and informal, as we encounter them in the contexts in which we find ourselves even though the specifics may well differ. Chevrier, (2009, pp77-89) points to the differences in HR culture and practice between France and the USA for instance. In this project I am describing my

experience in the context of an international NGO with its headquarters in the UK although it also corresponds to my experience in the UK public sector in central government. Both of these types of organisations with their histories rooted in UK culture are likely to have been subject to the emergence of the same set of expectations in dealing with people at work. This point about my experience relating to employment in the UK is important if we are to take seriously the idea that the patterning of how people relate together and what they assume to be true emerges from, and is inextricable from, their local context.

The work of Ludwik Fleck (1979) and his description of what he called ‘thought collectives’ presents an argument for how people come to take up ideas from their specific context and regard them as taken for granted truths. Fleck was a microbiologist working during the first half of the 20th century. He introduces a theory of the sociology of knowledge in which he argues that knowledge evolves in groups of people. He uses the example of the changes in understanding of syphilis to show how what we call scientific fact comes about through the interaction of many actors within the scientific community. He puts forward the idea of thought collectives and thought styles as a way of understanding truth. He argues that knowledge is produced through a social process within a thought collective that will have its own thought style. Fleck notes that the thought collective of scientists make claims for their truth being universal and social processes of enforcement are then used to criticize any argument that undermines their paradigm. Kuhn in his descriptive analysis of Fleck’s work argues that, “a thought style functions by constraining, inhibiting and determining the way of thinking. Under the influence of a thought style one cannot think in any other way” (Fleck, 1979, p160). It is clear that Fleck, in his description of the interactions between people in thought collectives and thought styles, was pointing at human power relating as being very important in the development and maintenance of knowledge and truth.

I find the work of Fleck helpful in understanding how the socially dependent nature of knowledge and truth, maintained and policed through social processes of enforcement, makes thinking in any other way than that which I have described, very difficult. Taking up this idea and applying it to the context of job interviews necessitates that we all, either with or without awareness, collude with each other as

to what is taken for granted as true. We may do so unwittingly if we have taken up ideas relating to job interviews as part of our own understanding of truth and knowledge as played out in our interaction with others. If we do so with awareness it may be because even if we have become aware of such taken for granted ideas, and personally challenge the truth of them, we may need to act as if they are true to continue to participate with others and avoid the risk of shame and exclusion. The work of Simmel and Goffman support my understanding that this collusion then involves us performing appropriately together when participating in such interviews. To do otherwise would be to give an inadequate performance and risk the exposure of our collusion and the ensuing negative judgment of each other and ourselves.

My Emerging Appreciation of Power

What has become increasingly clear in my research so far is that power relating between people is an important aspect of what I am describing as collusion. The power to give me the job I was applying for and to promote me was in the hands of the interviewing panel and in the context of my interview it would be easy to see power in those circumstances as being applied by the powerful interview panel upon the powerless interviewees. However, the obedience of all of us to the process of the interview cannot be so easily explained.

Michel Foucault as a social theorist was interested in what he described as disciplinary power and he suggests that the instruments of disciplinary power are surveillance and normalisation. In his work Foucault illustrated how techniques of disciplinary power emerged in institutions such as the army, hospitals, schools and the workplace in Europe. Foucault (1977) argues that the human body is disciplined and controlled to act in certain ways to show obedience. He was interested in how discursive practices produce individuals through disciplinary processes. Foucault describes discursive practices as historically and culturally specific sets of rules and norms. In discourse certain ways of speaking are legitimised that then regulate how people think and behave (ibid). In this process, power relating between people creates these discourses that then regulate what can be regarded as true. Power and knowledge are tangled up together and all human relationships are a negotiation of

power.

This is reminiscent of how Elias (2000) describes the development of French society with individuals coming to be who they are over time as they take the expectations of society as part of their own sense of self. There are also echoes of how Fleck (1979) describes the socially dependent nature of knowledge and truth. I am coming to understand power to be an inherent part of people relating to each other and that through it, what we come to assume to be true emerges and is in a constant state of renewal and negotiation. My exploration of power relating has come quite late in this project three and as I move into project four I want to explore it further.

Interviews as Participative Processes of Power Relating, Negotiation and Collusion Rather than Strategic Choices

In summing up my argument in this project I am proposing that the job interview is a social object in which the participants take up assumptions about how to perform from their familiarity with that social object and in the micro interactions in the specific contexts in which they find themselves. These interactions then take the form of an improvised negotiation in which people seek to achieve a desired or agreed outcome whilst being constrained and enabled by their own and others' assumptions and expectations about what is true which also show up in organisational rules and guidance, although the specific nature and content of such rules and guidance will be dependent upon how they have emerged in the particular context to which they pertain. This constraining and enabling leads to the necessity for people to collude with each other, with or without awareness, to maintain a social order and the impression of having made choices that could be justified to a wider audience through an explanation that appears to conform to the given guidance.

As I have said earlier, I have noticed in my research the potential for this collusion to take place between people in the maintenance of ways of being together which is often outside of their awareness. That is to say that it is taken for granted. It seems to me that in my experience of the job interview process there has developed, over time, a legitimisation of the discourse of strategic choice and rational decision making that

makes any other discourse difficult. As a consequence, people are colluding with each other to give the impression of using a notion of technical rationality that calls for gathering the facts, generating options and making choices that satisfy the objective. At the same time they are employing a form of rationality that involves making decisions and acting in a way that seems sensible given the observable reality of the circumstances they find themselves in, which inevitably involves emotion, ideology and cultural influences.

Mowles (2015) takes the position that there is nothing other than local interaction between people and changes occur in those paradoxically predictably unpredictable interactions that may maintain or change the wider social patterns of relating. Being able to act into situations such as the job interview requires the participants to be able to make choices in their particular situations whilst navigating both the written and unwritten rules that set out how one is expected to behave. Stacey (2012, p107) suggests that it is possible to offer a competent performance by following rules and procedures and that an expert performance requires us to move beyond those rules and procedures. He argues that experts demonstrate the ability to exercise practical judgment. Such practical judgment is the ability to reflexively improvise in recognizing patterns of similarity and difference drawn from experience. In the example of my job interview I would argue that having been aware of how the patterns of relating, such as turn taking, were emerging along with my anticipation of what was expected of me, I was exercising practical judgment in sustaining the social object of the interview whilst making choices about how to respond to achieve my desired outcome (to get the job) and to stay true to what I believed. This practical judgement involved me understanding and paying attention to how the power relations between those involved was expected to play out. In getting the job, it is true that I have been promoted and earn more money. It is also true that I can maintain my involvement in an influential position as a process of change is embarked upon in my organisation. In colluding with others in performing the job interview whilst also introducing ideas of complexity into the conversation I would also argue that I was introducing the potential for novelty to arise as I, along with others, take this work into the future.

Looking Ahead to Project Four

As I look towards project four I am increasingly noticing how my relationships with others are changing as I start to act into being the head of corporate change. Not only am I now having to think about how to apply to my work the many policies and rules and regulations that exist in my organisation, I also have to think about how I work with others to change those very rules and regulations to be more suitable for the desired future state of the organisation as described in what we call Vision 2020. All the while I am having to negotiate anew the many relationships I have from my new position which is a step up in the hierarchy. This new role involves me working much more closely with directors as part of their group even though I will not hold the formal position of a director. I will also have to work regularly with the board of trustees as another powerful group in deciding how we will work together in the future in my organisation. It remains to be seen how a programme of change will proceed. I am clear that I would prefer a process that paid attention to how people currently relate together across the organisation and brought people together in conversation as to how they might change. My assumption is that there will be many who hold expectations of a much more planned and conventional approach that involves the delivery of a pre-designed future state for the organisation. My intention is to bring into project four an exploration of how these dynamics are manifested in my experience.

Project Four: Attempting Change in a New Job, a Disciplining Experience

In project three I wrote about my experience of being interviewed for a new job. I described how participants in the job interview seemed to be involved in a form of group performance that emerged from a combination of the formal rules of job interviewing (which had themselves emerged over time in the organisation where I work in response to how similar rules emerged across the UK) as well as our expectations of each other based on previous experience of interviewing and being interviewed. I described this process as a form of social object, an idea that I took from Mead (1934). I experienced the interview process as a form of dance in which all participants are expected to perform their part. I drew on the work of Goffman (1959) and Simmel (1906) to demonstrate how a failure to perform as expected in the social object of the job interview would call into question the competence of that individual leading to the potential for shame emerging for those involved in the interviewing process. I went on to describe my experience of job interviews as being an example of what I am calling functional collusion. That is to say, for a successful performance of the social object, whether that social object is a facilitated event (such as I the one I described in project two) or a job interview, the participants are required to collude with one another in what they hold to be true and what they assume to know for them to go on relating together. However, the collusion I described in project two was outside of my awareness, while I was immersed in it, in that I was responding to my perception of the expectations of others involved as well as what I had come to know about facilitation from being involved in previous similar situations. Only on reflection after the event did I come to think of it as collusion in response to the anticipation of shame.

In project three, as a consequence of reflecting on my experience in project two, I was much more aware of how my perception of the expectations of others and the formal rules were affecting my choices about how I might perform in the circumstances I found myself in. As I pointed out in project three, much of the literature and guidance on job interviews attempts to contain emotion, ideology and cultural differences in pursuit of fairness to all job applicants. It is my assertion that emotion and ideology are inevitably involved in relating between human bodies and such attempts to set

emotions aside are futile. In making judgements about how to perform we are part of the interdependent gestures and responses of everyone involved in the social object.

Collusion and Power

In project three I argued that one of the functions of collusion in job interviews is to give the impression of certainty and predictability and reduce anxiety. Although I recognise that collusion may also happen to change things, I argued that functional collusion is a social phenomenon in which patterns of relating emerge over time as interdependent people interact with one another to maintain their ways of being together. Before and during the process of collusion there is no discussion, planning or even recognition of what is going on between those involved. In contrast, cooperation or conspiracy, imply some explicit recognition between the people involved about what they are trying to achieve.

I understand that interpreting collusion in this way is different to how collusion is commonly understood. Popular discourse usually describes collusion in pejorative terms. Indeed, the Collins English dictionary describes collusion as, “a secret agreement for a fraudulent purpose”. Moral judgement underpins most views of collusion. Some researchers working in economics and organisational studies see collusion as an undesirable aspect of how companies work together to avoid competition or to fix prices, (Marx, 2017; Harrington, 2016; Roux and Thoni, 2015 and Porter, 2005). These authors also assume that companies are entities in their own right and act with agency in relation to each other, which is very different to how I have been describing organisations. I would contest the idea that organisations could have any agency of their own. Since organisations cannot think or feel, they cannot have agency.

Other writers describe collusion between individuals in organisations and similarly assume that people act collusively with awareness to game the system (Tirole, 1986 and 1992; Laffont and Martimort, 2000; Kouroche, 2005). These authors are making collusion synonymous with corruption. In these examples the authors assume that collusion is a deliberate act between people for a specific purpose. This is quite

different to how I am describing it. I am arguing that organisations are imaginative constructs that enable and constrain how people interact with each other. Therefore, collusion cannot occur between organisations and can only occur between people in their local interactions. In addition, my definition of collusion is not as a deliberate act that has been discussed between people before they act. I am using the word collusion to point to an emergent pattern of relating between people of which they are often unaware.

Some other authors recognise aspects of what I am describing as collusion. Bullough Jr et al (2004) describe a form of collusion that takes place in communities of practice to maintain power dynamics. Although they are working in an educational setting their work supports my argument that collusion involves an absence of reflection by people about how they are relating to each other. Working in a medical setting Atkinson and McNamara (2016) reference what they call unconscious collusion in the relationships between midwives and patients in the avoidance of discussing obesity. The authors don't specify how they are using the word 'unconscious' but they describe such collusion as the use of evasive language that will minimize tension or distress without any form of prior agreement between the people involved. Although the authors describe a clinical setting, collusion through discourse is also part of what I am pointing to in an organisational context. In addition, I want to draw attention to the way Ashforth and Kreiner (2002) describe collusion as normalizing through the application of ritual. They describe how the performance of rituals and symbolic practices can minimize the experience of unwanted emotion and give momentum to a social process,

Thus, rituals tend to serve expressive rather than instrumental functions—although instrumental practices may well assume ritualistic overtones over time. Here, the term “ritualism” refers to the use of rituals (whether deliberate or otherwise) as a means of normalizing emotion. Normalizing is accomplished by fostering: (1) a sense of control or (2) a momentum of means (ibid, p224).

They describe a similar phenomenon to that which I have described in project three in which participants in a particular social situation (they use the example of a funeral

parlour) collude with mutually acceptable performances to maintain a particular view of what's going on. These authors assume that the individual and the social are separate and in their way of thinking an organisation is ascribed agency, which then acts upon the individual,

Accordingly, organisations often fill a therapist-like role, exposing individuals to anxiety-producing stimuli, but under somewhat controlled conditions so as to elicit responses sanctioned by the organisation (ibid, p223).

This then leads them to split the individual and organisation into levels in which one could consider whether the normalizing effect of rituals could be functional for the individual and/or the organisation, thus assuming a Kantian form of dialectic in which the paradox of the individual and the social forming and being formed by each other is collapsed into a both/and proposition. I have gone into more detail here because as Griffin (2002, pp5-6) explains, this splitting is common in theories of change. Whilst the authors describe how rituals may develop over time, the splitting of the individual and social and the reification of organisations allows for them the possibility that such normalizing could be instrumentalised by organisations as if they had agency. This reification is typical of how many authors write about change and organisational development (see Cummings and Cummings, 2014 as an example). It is common for authors to write about organisations as systems upon which one can act with tools and techniques. Most practitioners see organisational development as an approach to a total system and that an organisation is a sociotechnical system, (Warner Burke, 1994, p13). More recently, organisational development writing and research has moved from a diagnostic perspective to a dialogic perspective in which power, politics, self-organisation and emergence are recognized, but thinking of organisations as systems and an instrumentalist approach is retained (Bushe and Marshak, 2009).

So, whilst there are similarities between how many other authors and I conceive of organisations and collusion, there are also clear differences. For me, splitting the individual and thinking of the social as a system doesn't work as a social theory to explain how social patterns emerge from the interactions between people. As I argued earlier, the organisation is an imaginative construct, and organisations can have no agency of their own. Thinking in this way then directly challenges any suggestions

that normalization through the use of ritual could be instrumentalised or deliberately applied in the way that Ashforth and Kreiner (2002) suggest. Any intervention by anyone involved could only be an attempt to influence the ongoing patterning of how people are relating in any given context. Such an attempt would be to try to disturb the already present ongoing patterns of relating and may have unpredictable results. When I describe the possibility for people being able to collude with or without awareness I am suggesting that people can be more or less aware of collusive patterns of relating that are occurring as they interact with others. This awareness then leads to the potential to improvise actions in an attempt to change the patterns of relating or alternatively to perform in such a way as to maintain the collusion. Such collusion would become conspiracy if it was made explicit through discussion between those involved and, therefore, there is significant pressure to keep quiet.

Bullough Jr et al (2004), Atkinson and McNamara (2016) and Ashforth and Kreiner (2002) variously describe collusion as the absence of reflection between people relating to each other, the unconscious use of evasive language to minimize stress and anxiety and the minimizing of unwanted emotions through rituals and symbolic practices giving momentum to social processes. I would argue that these phenomena are also present in my description of functional collusion in organisations. I am arguing that people are unreflectively, and often unconsciously, using evasive language and taking up ritualistic and symbolic practices in processes of relating together to minimize distressing feelings and emotions.

I want to be clear that my use of the terms conscious and unconscious in this project is not drawn from a psychoanalytical perspective in which the unconscious is part of a person's internal world. Instead, I am taking the meaning of the word 'unconscious' from the perspective of complex responsive processes of relating. In this way of thinking, unconscious means the habitual and automatic gesture and response between people as physical bodies that is formed from their histories of relating together. People relate to one another in repetitive themes that are not discussed and are not understood by those involved in them unless they are able to reflexively discuss them. They then, without awareness, that is to say unconsciously, reiterate patterns of relating with the result that these patterns become stuck in rigid repetition leaving

little room for even small changes that may be amplified into new forms of relating (Stacey, 2003, pp141-142).

If we were to imagine collusion as a form of game, then we may describe this potential for individual choice making as how much one might choose to play the game and how much one would choose to call it into question. Issues of power dynamics are important as to how much an individual can question the game. When the power dynamics of any situation are weighted in favour of any one person or grouping, then those members of the group without power have very little scope to make individual decisions if those in powerful positions don't support it. Often, the only choice is to leave the group. If the power dynamics in a group are more or less equal then the scope for individual decision-making is greater for all involved with much less predictable outcomes (Elias, 1991, pp52-53). As I described in project three, the human body is disciplined and controlled to act in certain ways to show obedience, and discursive practices emerge as historically and culturally specific sets of rules and norms. In discourse, certain ways of speaking are legitimised that then constrain how people think and behave. All human relationships are a negotiation of power (Foucault, 1977). A person's ability to influence patterns of relating by calling the game into question will be dependent on the power dynamics of the situation, an individual's position in the group, and their ability to perform through improvising their performance in any given context.

Narrative One: Attempting Not to Collude

Since writing project three, I have started my new job as Head of Corporate Change. This puts me in the position of leading a major organisational change process aimed at large-scale changes in how work gets done, and how power is distributed across the organisation, as well as a reduction in the number of people employed. This change is described in the documentation as the delivery of a vision of a new global network that is digitally enabled and financially resilient. This documentation has emerged from many prior meetings between many senior managers in response to how they see the need for change in the organisation. In this new job I find myself working for a great deal of my time with the executive team of directors including the chief

executive. I also regularly report progress to the board of trustees of the charity. What follows is a narrative drawn from my early experience in this job and especially from an experience of working with the directors and the board of trustees in discussion about how the change process might take place.

In taking this job, I have also started participating in the ongoing relating between existing directors and trustees. Some of the meetings I participated in suggested that relationships between these groups were tense. Darren, the fundraising director, was in an ongoing dispute with the trustee who was chairing the fundraising committee about the fundraising strategy. At one meeting Barbara was describing an altercation between her, Darren and this trustee. Barbara was visibly upset as she recounted the argument. There had also been tension between some of the directors in the shifting of some people between departments.

Into this set of tense relationships we were introducing the change programme across several work streams and the membership of those streams included senior managers from across the organisation. The changing shape of how the organisation worked had been emerging from these work streams in what felt like a haphazard manner at times. In board meetings and director's meetings I sensed a growing frustration from others, both directors and trustees, because they were dissatisfied with the slow pace of change. They talked of wanting to see a more concrete description of the changes being proposed.

During a coffee break at one particular board meeting one of the trustees suggested that I might find the work of John Kotter useful in thinking about how the change process might be managed. In setting up the change programme I resisted the use of any models or processes that one would recognise from some of the classic authors on change: models such as Kotter's eight steps to implementing successful change (1996) or Lewin's unfreezing and freezing of organisational systems (1947). Lewin's prescription for change offers a model whereby managers can apply force to counteract resistance and to unfreeze and freeze organisational processes and systems to make change possible and to make it stick. Lewin takes a functionalist approach and conceives of social processes as fields upon which one can directly act. The reason I resisted using these kinds of models and prescriptions is that I am

uncomfortable with their underpinning assumptions of organisations as systems upon which managers can act in an instrumental and predictable way. In common with other authors writing about organisational development and change (as discussed above), both authors reify organisations and offer tools and techniques for changing them. As I described in project one, I also used to think about organisations in those terms. However, I now view organisations much more as imaginative constructs in people's minds (Stacey, 2012, p60). Increasingly, as I reflect on my experience, I find Stacey's assertion that it is impossible to do the designing, aligning or constructing of whole organisations much more convincing than I do the kind of models offered by Kotter and Lewin.

Every time we had a board meeting I was expected to update the trustees on progress on the change programme that we called Vision 2020. Within this Vision 2020 programme was the idea of movement towards becoming a global network. The aim was to have a more even share of power between the organisational entities that form it. In this way the whole organisation was to be reshaped from a centrally managed one into a network of peer entities. Updating and reporting to the board consisted of the preparation of a paper or proposal, which was then reviewed at a preceding directors meeting before going to trustees to be considered at a board meeting. For the meeting I am going on to describe in this project I prepared just such a paper, also reviewed by Directors, in which I invited trustees to consider the implications of deliberately attempting to change the way power relating is managed across the organisation. I planned to have a session in which participants in the meeting would split into small groups to discuss the following question, "How do we manage the challenges arising from the power transitions involved in delivering a globally networked organisation?" This would be followed by a plenary session in which we would share the group discussions.

The board meeting opened, as most meetings do in my organisation, with what is called a "reflection". Usually this involves one of the participants offering some reflective thoughts, and these are often drawn from a biblical text. On this occasion one of the trustees used the text from 1 Corinthians 12 in which followers of God are all encouraged to see themselves as one body in God, indivisible, much as the parts of a body are indivisible.

The trustee then went on to suggest that our organisation as a body needs to learn from this reading and think of ourselves as a body where all parts are equal and yet diverse. There was no response to this reflection in the meeting, merely a period of quiet. There was no opportunity to discuss what it meant to think of the organisation in this way. In fact, I got a strong sense from the responses around me (people sat in silence, and bowed their heads as if in prayer) that to ask for such a discussion would be somehow disrespectful towards the speaker. The upshot was that no one else, including me, said anything and we accepted the reading and the reflection as was.

For me there are clear systems assumptions in this way of thinking. The one body argument in which we all play a part seems to me to be a call for alignment and the sacrifice of the individual to the group. Due to the Christian nature of the organisation, and the customary process of these pre-meeting reflections, these assumptions seem to be taken up as true but for me they gloss over the power struggles that often take place between individuals in groups. I experience these reflections as a form of rhetoric that severely narrows any opportunity for reflexive discussion about whether it is even appropriate to require such individual submission. My experience of the board meeting that followed is that the expectations of unity set up by this rhetoric made explorative and potentially conflictual conversations difficult. The meeting was, for the most part, a tightly managed set piece as we went quickly through the many agenda items.

I went on to facilitate the session that I had planned. My approach departed from the normal pattern, which is to present trustees with three options, outlining pros and cons, and ask them to discuss and choose between them. Instead, I invited them to have an open conversation in small groups and to consider how we might pursue the idea of sharing power across the different geographical groups that exist as part of the organisation.

In setting up this conversation I offered my view that power is not something one possesses and one cannot therefore give it away. I suggested instead that power is a facet of all of our relationships and that renegotiating the power relationships across the organisation could not be done through a central plan devised by either me or

them as a group of trustees. I didn't explain why I held that view because in such situations my own view, and the theoretical concepts that underpin it, seem so different to those around me that I felt any attempt to explain myself would flounder. I had hoped, and to some extent expected, that trustees would accept the task I had given them and co-operate with me.

As I invited trustees to discuss these issues they seemed unsure as to how to proceed. One of them, Penelope, a director from a large manufacturing company, said she wasn't sure what I was asking her to do. I said that I was inviting them into my thinking, that this conversation was intended to give them an opportunity to consider the implications of the idea of a global network and how we might make it happen. I got the impression that the trustees wanted something more familiar, something much more specific to consider and perhaps they wanted me to do the thinking for them. The groups had some discussions and in a plenary conversation the overall impression was that they wanted a more concrete proposal. They said that it was difficult for them to consider how they might respond to a global network until a firmer proposal in the form of some prototypes was in place. As a consequence of this conversation I undertook to develop some firmer proposals on what these prototypes might look like. I wondered, was this me colluding? I wanted to maintain a sense of exploration for this group and the executive directors, but kept feeling as if I was being forced to go away and prepare a model of the organisation as if it was a piece of machinery. In agreeing to do this I felt as though I was being disciplined into colluding with a way of thinking with which I didn't agree.

Whilst there seemed to be agreement across the trustees about the move to a global network in which power was more distributed, there seemed to be some dissatisfaction as to how I had presented the way forward. However, during lunch, immediately after my session, one of the trustees sat down next to me. He became quite animated and argued that we were focusing on the wrong things. He suggested that the move to a global network and discussions of power were a distraction from being more effective in eradicating poverty. I was curious as to why he hadn't raised this point in the meeting but I found myself defending the change that was proposed. I argued that shifting power and reaching for more of a partnership way of working was a desirable thing to work for.

It seems that in the face of an apparently unanimous and publicly agreed narrative of the change programme this trustee didn't feel able to voice his concerns in the meeting with the other trustees present. Perhaps this indicates his own assessment of his position of powerlessness in the group. That he was able to voice his concerns to me over lunch is also interesting in that it may indicate his perception that he might be able to influence the board through me. The idea of moving towards a globally networked organisation is clearly one of the themes patterning the discourse in this group that has somehow become publicly unarguable. My response in defence of the idea surprises me as I reflect on it. I am not personally wedded to the idea of a global network and his critique of it makes a lot of sense to me. However, coming so soon after the bruising encounter of my own session, perhaps I wasn't interested in taking something up that might cause even more trouble. Also, to cast doubt on the programme of change is to potentially cast doubt on my own role in it, something I wasn't ready to do. It seems that as a justification for my continued engagement in the process, the publicly unarguable nature of the proposed change also has a function for me in being able to close down the potentially conflictual conversation with this trustee, just as the other trustees had done with me in the meeting.

At the other breaks and after dinner in the evening I felt detached from the conversations that went on. I saw people talking in groups of two and three and felt awkward at the idea of just joining any of them. I decided to go to bed early, more or less straight after dinner. In other circumstances I enjoy socializing over dinner and drinks so this was unusual behaviour for me. I'll say more about this in the next section.

The next day the directors met to consider the outcomes of the board meeting. In this meeting Barbara, the CEO, said that she thought that the chair of the board was losing patience with the vagueness of our proposal for a global network (I privately responded to this as a rebuke to me for not doing my job properly). She added that we must quickly move to more firm proposals. I felt ill at ease throughout this meeting. I felt a strong sense of responsibility for the change programme and defensive about the slow pace of progress that seemed to be the perception of others. Throughout this meeting I also perceived the conversation going on without me. I found it difficult to

know when to say something and when not to. At one point Sharon said that there had been little progress in how the work streams had developed and I responded quite strongly and argued that there had been clear progress on how we might change how we budget and plan projects that operate across the organisation. Neil, one of the directors, was chairing the meeting and he cut across me and moved the meeting to the next agenda item. Two other times I attempted to offer a view on the discussions in the meeting only to be cut off by Neil again. I felt belittled and excluded by Neil and the others. It was as if the disciplining process I experienced at the board meeting was still going on.

The directors and I met again the following week and in this meeting Barbara facilitated a discussion to develop what she described as the prototype of the global network. We discussed how each entity might bring leverage to the network and the different contributions each might make. We also discussed the idea of a global council that might, in the future, provide the governance for the network. As we talked, Barbara drew a model on a flipchart with boxes and circles to denote an entity in the network, its contribution and its leverage. As this model developed I sensed a relief running through the group, people's bodies seemed to become markedly more relaxed. I shared this relief that the need for a prototype seemed to be being served and I felt guilty that it was Barbara rather than me who facilitated the discussion that produced the prototype. On reflection I'm puzzled by why I felt relieved and guilty. Barbara had collapsed our thinking about how we might manage the dynamics of how people relate to each other into boxes and circles on a piece of paper and I might well have been angered by that. It has taken me sometime to understand why I wasn't. It seems to me that, without being aware of it, I have taken up the pattern of conflict avoidance, in the board meeting, in the conversation over lunch between the trustee and me, and in this meeting with the directors. As a result, I was left feeling confused and unsure as to my ongoing contribution to the overall change process.

An Analysis of the Narrative So Far

I will add a further narrative later in this project but for now I will provide some reflexive analysis of the story so far. I have understood that what I was experiencing

was the disciplining process of joining the new groups of directors and board of trustees. My feelings of being inadequate may come from not knowing how to be in these circumstances. The board meeting took place over two days and an overnight stay. Rather than staying to talk and form political alliances with others after dinner, I chose to go to bed and avoid further discussions. I had a sense that I couldn't trust myself to have any conversations with directors and trustees without unwittingly committing a 'faux pas' of some kind. I felt a lot of responsibility to get things done and ended up feeling inadequate when things were not moving fast enough. I know that I cannot be solely responsible for how things emerge from the interactions between many people at different times and in different places and yet I found myself feeling that way. This has echoes of how Foucault (1982) describes the disciplining effect of discourse. It seemed that if I were to make a plea for others to recognise the complexity of what we were trying to achieve, it would in some way be construed as an attempt by me to avoid my proper responsibility and that I must collude with the relatively simplistic, individualistic and overly optimistic views of how things get done.

In my participation in the board meeting I was making judgements about when to challenge the assumptions we were making and when to compromise and go along with them. I often felt that I lacked the confidence in myself to be able to challenge any existing assumptions that I perceived and in response to the disciplining processes going on in my relationships with these people, I didn't have the power and influence to be able to adequately argue my position.

I am reminded of my description in project one of when I presented to a board the Burke Litwin model (1992) as the basis upon which I had understood the findings of my review of a particular division. I drew attention to the suggested positive strategic impact that aligned leadership, organisational culture, and mission and strategy can have on an organisation. I then went on to explain how these factors were misaligned in the division under review and gave suggestions as to how changes in leadership would be likely to lead to improved performance. The use of the model had the desired effect in the group and was met with acceptance and nods and smiles from the person chairing the meeting. It is clear to me now that I was using the model to manage my own anxiety about the impact of my work and to call upon symbolic

power (Bourdieu, 1992, pp163-183) to improve my position relative to others in this meeting through which I could be experienced as knowledgeable and therefore right in my assessment and proposals for change. I was clearly unconsciously colluding with this group in using the model to support me politically and practically in my work in a situation where ideas of management control were taken for granted.

As I explain below, I have come to understand power to be an inherent part of people relating to each other through which what we understand to be true emerges, changes or is maintained. As a consequence, I would describe what was happening in the narrative about the review quite differently now to how I would have understood it as I was writing project one. In that short narrative I now see my responses to the challenge of how to present the findings in my review as being disciplined by my understanding of what was expected of me by the group to which I was responding. Even at that time I was sceptical about the systems perspective that was inherent in the model I was using but my sense was that such a reality was taken for granted by those to whom I was presenting. Therefore, in using it I was taking up those ideas to win favour. As the chair nodded and smiled I felt immediate relief and confidence. I wanted to be accepted by those who I saw as holding the power in that group and the use of the Burke Litwin model helped me to achieve that. It was this kind of collusion that I see that I was trying to avoid in the board meeting.

What I was trying to do instead was to draw attention to the challenges that we were facing and invite exploration into what should be done in response to them. I thought it would be unethical for me to make a claim to the symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1989) that comes from using organisational models given that I was aware of the collusion that would involve. Bourdieu argues that,

symbols are the instruments *par excellence* of social integration: as instruments of knowledge and communication...they make it possible for there to be a *consensus* which contributes fundamentally to the reproduction of the social order (ibid, p166).

As a consequence of choosing not to collude I couldn't benefit from the relief and confidence that may have come from doing so. In not colluding I was also calling into

question the social order; the unspoken consensus; the apparent truth of how to behave in such meetings. What I am describing here is indicative of how my thinking has changed as I have come to understand power differently and that truth and knowledge are historically and socially dependent. Foucault describes well how power, knowledge and truth are intertwined,

Truth isn't outside power... Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics of truth'; that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true, the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned... the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (Foucault, 1980, p131).

Relating this to my narrative, in my choice not to use the well-known models of change management that privilege individualistic and systems perspectives, I am forfeiting my claim to knowledge given that such perspectives are assumed to be true, appropriate and professional in the context that I am in at work. Perhaps, in not colluding I was also trying to change the way people think about power by my description of it as a process. However, I was carrying out this political act without having invested time and effort in forming alliances and building trust with those with whom I was working.

I am persuaded by Elias' (2000) argument that my identity has been formed by my own social experience, which would include assumptions of the truth of such perspectives. It's understandable that I would feel incompetent given that the individualistic and systemic assumptions will also be part of my own identity in this social context. In other contexts, such as the DMan group with its habitus of reflective inquiry, I would feel much more confident in putting forward my viewpoint about power and teasing out the assumptions. The work of Bourdieu and his description of habitus helps me to understand the process of identity formation and will assist me in explaining why my identity is different at work as opposed to within the DMan community, the consequences of this, and what this reveals about collusion.

Bourdieu: Habitus and Implicit Collusion

Bourdieu's (1990, pp52-65) idea of habitus is helpful in understanding that the individual and the social are paradoxically forming and being formed by each other in the "internalization of externality and the externalization of internality" (Wacquant, 2016, p65). This forming of the individual identity involves the patterns of relating in society becoming imprinted upon the person and shows up in how people think, feel and act as they respond to their environment and the enabling constraints they experience (ibid). There are echoes here then of the paradoxical forming and being formed by our social experience as described by Mead (1934) that I described in project two and the civilizing process described by Elias (2000) that I took up in project three. From the perspective of complex responsive processes of relating there is nothing going on in social life other than bodies relating to each other. If we take that perspective when thinking about Bourdieu's habitus, even though he sees the individual and the social as being separate phenomena which are dialectically related rather than paradoxical, it helps us to understand how bodies physically take on the patterns of relating that they experience in their social environment which are then reproduced (although never in exactly the same way) in continuing interaction.

For Bourdieu (2000) the forming of who we are through our social experience of groups is a thoroughly bodily experience. He argues that through a disciplining process exerted through emotional, psychological and even physical suffering, our very bodies are imprinted with the habitus in which we become who we are. Bourdieu is suggesting here that we are conditioned, as we are brought up, to act appropriately, to act in accordance with a habitus that is also continuously being formed and performed by us, and those around us. Bourdieu makes it clear that this conditioning is a bodily process and he likens it to the mutilation and scarification of tattoos. This tattooing metaphor gives a sense of permanence that I find problematic as I see identity formation as a more dynamic and plastic process. Nonetheless, I think the argument that we bodily become the habitus in which we participate still works.

Bourdieu describes our participation and maintenance of the habitus as implicit collusion. This is how I see the process that I am experiencing at work and which I

have also described as functional collusion. A way of being together that is taken for granted,

Habitus is the basis of an *implicit collusion* among all the agents who are produced of similar conditions and conditionings, and also offer practical experience of the transcendence of the group, of its ways of being and doing, each agent finding in the conduct of all of his peers the ratification and legitimation ('the done thing') of his own conduct, which, in return, ratifies and, if need be, rectify, the conduct of the others. This *collusion*, an immediate agreement in ways of judging and acting which does not presuppose either the communication of consciousness, still less a contractual decision, is the basis of the practical mutual understanding, the paradigms of which might be the one established between members of the same team, or, despite the antagonism, all the players engaged in a game (Bourdieu, 2000, p145).

Reflecting on my own experience helps me to make sense of what Bourdieu is saying. In project one I described a series of events that led to the resignation of a senior home office Minister in the UK. The assumptions about leadership and management pertaining to those events meant that the Minister was expected to be in full control of what was going on in his department. Given these assumptions, when the Minister said something that turned out to be untrue in Parliament, he must either have been incompetent or lying. The truth of what was going on was that a complex set of events was emerging from a huge number of interactions between people across many geographical areas in which, what people knew and did not know, was changing moment by moment. However, if the Minister were to point to what was actually going on, and the difficulties involved in knowing what was happening in such a dynamic situation, it could only have been judged both by others and by himself that he wasn't in control. Indeed, if what I am arguing about people being formed by (and forming) the habitus holds true, then the Minister could well have felt incompetent and that he should have had control. As I was involved in these events, and have been involved in many similar smaller events relating to managing and being managed in the past, I have been formed by my experience and it's unsurprising that I have taken up these assumptions about what it is to lead and manage others. Therefore, the

expectation I have come to have of myself is that I should be in control of the outcomes for which I am held responsible.

Bourdieu argues that emotions are integral to people's responses and actions as they are shaped and directed by the habitus (Emirbayer and Goldberg, 2005). Vince and Voronov (2012) suggest that it is important that studies of institutional work recognise the importance of emotions. I would agree in that how I was feeling when engaging with directors and the board of trustees had a great deal of influence on my choices about how to act in those groups. My wish to belong to these groups whilst also being asked, through my contract of employment, to consider ways to transform these groups, and how they relate to each other, left me feeling conflicted about how to act. If I take the view that there is nothing going on other than local relating between people, habitus can only show up in the processes of relating that take place in what Griffin (2002) calls the living present. As human beings we are "continually constructing the future on the basis of the enabling constraints developed over time as our past" (ibid, p184). In project two I argued that shame was an individually experienced social process and the anticipation of shame was a significant factor in the group of directors engaging in collusion to avoid such shame. It seems to me that my emotional response to what was going on in the narrative above was a defining factor as to how enabled and constrained I was in my actions. I will go on now to discuss feelings and emotions and how I consider them to be important factors in how people are constrained and enabled in their relating together in organisations.

Feelings and emotions as Emergent Social Processes

Fineman (2000, p79) describes how the experience of emotion in organisations is influenced by the context of how people relate to each other at work. He suggests that emotion is important in how we define our work relationships, which people spend much of their time at work maintaining. Simpson and Marshall (2010) argue that emotion can be described as "dynamic relational practices that are part and parcel of the everyday social interactions of organisational members", that "arise in gestural conversations in which differences between intended meanings and perceived interpretations may come to be recognized by socially engaged selves" (ibid, p362).

Or, as Emirbayer and Goldberg (2005), drawing on Bourdieu, Dewey and Mead put it,

...such transactions (collective action), which include social movements as well as the various institutional and extra-institutional forces with which they engage, always unfold within a context of transpersonal emotional investments, a collective-psychological context of action (ibid, p470).

Burkitt (2014) points out that how we interpret our feelings as emotions depends on the context. He argues that how we interpret our bodily experiences depends on the circumstances we find ourselves in. By way of explanation as to the importance of context I would point to my physical experience of the session with trustees I have set out in the narrative above. As confusion in the group began to arise my heart rate quickened, my breathing became shallow, my gut tightened, and I could sense that my body was shaking. This is what I would call the uncomfortable and unwelcome experience of panic and shame in those circumstances. However, if I was seated on a roller coaster and was about to set off at high speed I may feel very similar physical experiences but there would be no sense of panic or shame, only the anticipation of a thrilling ride.

Other authors support the idea that emotions in general, and shame in particular, is important in the maintenance of power relations at work. Creed et al (2014) suggest that communities at work are shaped by power and that what they call systemic shame, the sense of shame, and episodic shaming, are integral to sustaining them. Smith-Crowe and Warren suggest that shame is differentiated from guilt in that “one feels guilty about a specific behaviour rather than evaluating the global self negatively, while shame is elicited by transgressions for which the global self is blamed” (2014, pp4-5). This differentiation is aligned with how I described these emotions in project two. Smith-Crowe and Warren (ibid) further argue that shame and guilt along with embarrassment are self-directed moral emotions that indicate to those experiencing them that they have done wrong. I have described what I was feeling in my narrative as shame because it was not so much a feeling that I was ‘doing’ something wrong, rather, it was a sense that I was ‘being’ something wrong, that how I was performing my identity didn’t belong in that context.

These descriptions of the importance of emotions and how they are socially and contextually dependent is useful in understanding how, by not colluding with the usual ways of relating in the group of trustees and directors, I brought about the potential for shame, resulting from not knowing what to do, for me and everyone else involved. It is likely therefore that the group's response to this possibility was to subtly exclude me and for me to exclude myself. Whilst no one specifically told me I had done anything wrong, it is clear to me now that I had not performed in a way that maintained the usual ways of relating and the power dynamics in this group. This may well have introduced uncertainty and ambiguity into what might happen next in a way that may have led to emotional discomfort for the participants as it clearly did for me.

In project three I described how in job interviews there is a perception that a separation exists between thinking and feeling and that to think rationally one has to remove feelings from the equation. Damasio (2000, pp40-41) challenges the idea that human choice making can be devoid of emotion. Through exploring the brain, and responses of people with brain damage, he argues that the areas of the brain that are responsible for rational decision making, that is making choices about what is appropriate to do in any given context, and emotional experience are physiologically intertwined. Damasio goes on to argue that feelings and emotions are essential to our ability as people to make sensible choices. He connects this with our ability to make ethical judgements. Damasio suggests that outside of our awareness the brain monitors and regulates how our organs such as the heart, lungs, gut, and muscles as well as the immune system, physically respond to stimuli. He calls these background feeling states and argues that such states unconsciously narrow down the options for us as we make choices about what to do. These feeling states are attached to learning experiences when the body perceives external objects such as a smell or someone's face. When an individual experiences something similar to a previous experience, similar feeling states are roused that help them make sense of what is going on. Damasio distinguishes feelings from emotions in that he argues that emotions arise when such a background feeling state is connected with a particular mental image.

Burkitt (2014, pp78-99) recognizes Damasio's contribution to understanding that reason and emotion can't be separated but he suggests that Damasio uses a cognitive-behavioural framework to understand feelings and emotions and as a consequence he artificially separates them. Burkitt also argues that Damasio, in attributing the genesis of emotions to the brain and body, misses the social and contextual nature of them. I'm inclined to agree with Burkitt. In the board meeting I was thinking that the panic and shame I was experiencing were as a consequence of my personal response when interacting with others and were arising from within my body. Of course, they were bodily experiences (of which I would be hard pushed to distinguish between feeling states and emotions) but I wasn't paying attention to the paradoxical social process involved. I would argue that in the complex social gesture and response between me and the board of trustees as I was attempting to avoid collusion, confusion arose in the group as to what to do next. This confusion led to panic in the group in the anticipation of shame because of my choosing not to collude. This deliberate mis-performance by me in the social object of the board meeting, without having first made the political alliances necessary to take people along with me, led to a subtle collective disciplining process, involving feelings of shame, through which I became excluded from the group. This, I would suggest, is the disciplining social process that supports the maintenance of the status quo through requiring a form of implicit collusion. It is this repetitive form of relating in organisational contexts that I am pointing to in the board meeting between directors and trustees that I am calling functional collusion. In maintaining the social object of the meeting, we needed to make improvisational choices about what we were doing in our micro interactions to maintain and recreate the overall pattern. The need for thinking about what we were doing whilst we were doing it was greatly reduced by familiarity with the process, and as a consequence the need to pay attention to our choices, as we improvised, was greatly reduced. This then points to the functionality of such collusion in minimizing the need for continually discussing what to do next, in maintaining social momentum and minimizing the possibility of uncomfortable feelings and emotions.

As I prepared for the meeting with trustees my assumption was that as corporate head of change, part of my job was to raise issues that related to how we were thinking about how the organisation needed to change. In our discussions about a move to a globally networked organisation and a more global management and governance

structure it seemed to me that the trustees would want to discuss how this might affect their experience of working together. However, in inviting them to discuss this in a way that they didn't expect I may well have unnecessarily caused higher levels of anxiety than I had intended that resulted in my partial exclusion from the group. On reflection, given that I was acting with some awareness of what I was doing, there are clear ethical considerations in making choices about how much I chose to collude or not to collude with this group.

Ethics in the Living Present

When we think about making ethical choices the phrase, 'the ends justify the means' often comes to mind. I take this phrase to mean that the 'ends' - the outcome one is trying to achieve justifies the 'means' - the method one is using to achieve them even if one has ethical reservations about those methods. Thinking in this way separates the means and the ends as a kind of before and after and as such there is an assumption that the present and the future are somehow separable and that one can deliberately create a future through planning and acting in the present. Stacey (2012) argues that this way of thinking involves a form of Kantian dialectic that I described above and represents the dominant discourse in organisations. From this perspective the future can be predicted as an outcome of our current action, and is much aligned with the thinking that underpins the work of Kotter and Lewin that I discussed earlier.

However, I would contest this view of ethics. Griffin (2002, pp169-170) argues that the future is perpetually being constructed in the 'living present' through the gestures and responses between people in local contexts. These gestures and responses form patterns around themes. Organisational themes are often framed around visions, values and cultures of organisations. Whilst these themes are often framed as global, they can only arise in local situations in the living present. This living present then is the moment-to-moment interaction between people in which understanding of the past and anticipation of the future is constructed; it cannot be comprehended as 'now' as it will always have just passed us as we try to understand it. The use of global themes then acts as an enabling constraint in sustaining or changing current power relations.

The outcome of these interactions can be relatively unknown. Current patterns of power relating may be maintained or they may change.

If we take up this way of thinking about ethics, we can see that the idea of the ends justifying the means is a theme through which our local interaction is framed. We cannot really know the 'ends' so they can only really be a theme that shapes the 'means'. I am arguing that the ethics of taking action can only become apparent as the interactions play out in a social context. As Mead says,

You do have to bring the end into your intention, into your attitude. You can at every stage of the act be acting with reference to the end: and you can embody the end in the steps that you are immediately taking. That is the difference between meaning well and having the right intentions. Of course, you cannot have the final result in your early steps of the act but you can at least state that act in terms of the conditions which you are meeting (1934, p383).

In taking the idea of the living present seriously with regard to ethics I would argue that it becomes very important to pay attention to the themes that are at play in our local interactions that have arisen in our history and may be being reiterated without awareness. If I take this into my reflections on my earlier narrative I can see that there are competing goods at play for me. In bringing up power relating for the group of directors and trustees I was pointing to a theme that shapes their ongoing relating. In doing so in a way to which they are not accustomed, I was also asking them to relate to each other in a different way. This could be a good thing to do, as they have specifically referenced changing the way power is distributed in the organisation as something they want to do. However, in introducing the potential for novelty in the way they relate together I was also introducing the potential for the discomfort of panic and shame. In addition, I was risking being excluded from this group as a way for them to maintain their current patterns of relating. My experience of this group so far has been that they focus intently on controlling the future through many plans and strategies attempting to control the income, expenditure and outcomes of the organisation. In their interactions, the idea of focusing on future predictable outcomes is an unalloyed good thing to do. In this way the future is split off from the past and the present.

What I am proposing is that we focus on the ethics involved in our relating together in the living present in which our understanding of the past and anticipation of the future shape our interaction. I am arguing that this cannot be collapsed into a set of proposals or list of ideal behaviours but needs to be a reflexive response to what is going on between us in the here and now. This does involve the risk of feelings of panic and shame arising as our identities are potentially changed as a consequence of emerging changes in power relating.

If I take up this way of thinking in reflecting on Barbara's actions as she drew up the prototype model I can see that the anxiety in the group was being alleviated in a number of ways. The directors were comfortable with Barbara taking the lead in the conversation as she is the chief executive and she often does so. In addition, in focusing on controlling the future using systems models Barbara is reiterating familiar themes of how the group relate to each other thereby reducing the potential for shame and panic. We can see that Barbara was acting in accordance with the accepted power dynamics in the group and making shared assumptions about the use of systemic models. I would argue that she was unconsciously colluding. In my own feelings of relief as Barbara took this action I can see that as a participant and member of this group I share the anticipation of discomfort that was being felt and enjoyed the relief of it becoming less likely. However, I felt an ongoing and different sense of disquiet as my role in the organisation is bound up with the idealized depiction of how I as an individual can instigate change. Yet, in this case my relief was as a consequence of us falling back into a form of functionally colluding with one another to maintain the status quo.

When I have shared this narrative with other researchers in the DMan community they have pointed to how little I did to prepare the group for the session I was asking the trustees to participate in. In not doing much in the way of preparatory conversations with them, I was introducing a surprising novelty. They were expecting something familiar and I was withholding it. Stacey (2001, p158) argues that when anxiety is acute then great efforts are made to reiterate familiar patterns of relating with minimal variation. It's not surprising then that the group would blame me for withholding the familiar and consequently I was subtly excluded, and I then went on

to exclude myself. In my narrative so far, my judgement has led to an outcome that I wasn't seeking, my partial exclusion. I compounded this exclusion by not taking the opportunities that might have arisen to explain myself through participating in the informal conversations after dinner. As I have reflected on this with my colleagues on the DMan (and even as I write it here), I have felt shame at how I seem to have misjudged my approach to engaging with directors and trustees. How then might one be able to engage ethically with others in exploring the potential for change and the clear possibility for discomfort for those involved without being excluded? Mowles (2012) links ethics, as I have been describing them here, with what he calls practical judgment. The idea of practical judgement comes from the work of Aristotle on *phronesis* and has been taken up by a number of authors to describe the skill of dealing with contradictions and dilemmas in one's ongoing relating with others, (Mowles, 2015; Shotter and Tsoukas, 2014).

Practical Judgement

By using the phrase practical judgement, I am not suggesting that it is simply deciding what to do. Aristotle argued that there are three ways of thinking about knowledge. First there is *episteme*, which is a scientific way of knowing in which truth is an external and universal constant. The assumptions are that there are timeless laws and that the causality of phenomena can be discovered through experimentation. Secondly, there is *techne*, which is a mode of knowledge that comes about through the incremental process of learning such as in developing a craft or art. In this mode, knowledge is still context free and manifests as rules, principles and propositions. Thirdly, there is *phronesis*, which is a way of knowing that is action oriented, context dependent and pragmatic. *Phronetic* knowledge, which is the same as practical judgement, comes about through taking a reflective stance on experience. It cannot be taught through rules or principles because of its context dependence (Stacey, 2012, pp56-57; Hager, 2000; Doddington, 2013). Stacey (2012) argues that one can see the assumptions of *episteme* in systems thinking of wholes and parts and that *techne* assumptions show up in the instrumentalisation of organisational tools and models. However, Stacey does not argue for a splitting off or privileging of any one or other of these ways of knowing. Instead he suggests that managers in organisations may

well take up systems thinking or approaches involving tools and techniques as part of deciding what to do. He points to the social nature of making practical judgements in that it involves interdependent people inquiring into the patterns of relating in which people negotiate what is ethical. This is reminiscent of my description of the competing ‘goods’ that were at play in the narrative above as I was choosing how much to collude in minimizing anxiety and how much I was choosing not to collude in trying to raise awareness of the power dynamics as I worked with the directors and trustees. Gadamer (2004) suggests that practicing phronesis,

...means that one distinguishes what should be done from what should not, it is not simply practical shrewdness and general cleverness. The distinction between what should and should not be done includes the distinction between the proper and the improper and thus presupposes a moral attitude, which it continues to develop (ibid, p21).

In my narrative I was trying not to collude because I thought, and still think, that it is ethical to try to become aware of and to pay attention to the power relating that is going on between me and others as we decide what to do next. It is this awareness of power relating that gives us the opportunity to bring these ethical choices into play in our conversations. There are clear ethical choices in trying to change the power configurations in the organisation by changing the governance arrangements and trustees had already agreed that they wanted to explore that idea. However, for me to raise such issues with practical judgement in this situation would have meant being able to do so whilst minimizing the risk of being excluded and to maintain my place in the game, even if that meant colluding with concepts and models drawn from systems perspectives. I hadn’t played the game that directors and trustees were expecting. I introduced significant novelty without adequately preparing the ground and I lacked the symbolic and political capital to carry it off. As Bourdieu (1991), points out, “This solidarity between all the initiates, linked together by the same fundamental commitment to the game and its stakes... is never demonstrated so clearly as when the game itself is threatened” (ibid, p180).

It’s clear to me now that my attempt to change the way the trustees and directors were used to relating to each other failed to recognise the importance of the game and their

investment in it. Consequently, taking seriously the notion that one's identity is formed by one's social experience, it was received as a misrecognition of their identity. Honneth (1995) argues that,

The reproduction of social life is governed by the imperative for mutual recognition because one can develop practical relation to self only when one has learned to view oneself, from the normative perspective of one's partners in interaction, as their social addressee (ibid, p93).

I wasn't paying sufficient attention to the routines of social recognition that were a part of this group relating together and I offered a clear threat to the 'game' that was in process. It's clear then that to maintain participation and to act with practical judgement, recognition of the participants in the game and their processes of relating is important.

I find this understanding of what it means to exercise practical judgement helpful in my consideration of when to collude and when not to. Taking seriously the idea of the living present, and reflecting on the feelings and emotions that were involved for me and almost certainly for others, as I've said above, I think bringing an exploration of power relating into my conversation with the trustees was an important and ethical thing to do. Yet I can recognise that it is unhelpful and potentially self-defeating to refuse to take up models and tools that are accepted and expected to properly recognise others in our processes of social relating. To refuse to collude rigidly and without variation is likely to result in exclusion and a discontinuation of one's participation and therefore one's influence, if one is in a less powerful position in any given situation. Conversely, if one is in a powerful position it could result in something of a tyrannical expectation of people having to cope with extreme anxiety and uncomfortable emotions. As I will explore in the further narrative below, my experience suggests that if one can be sufficiently detached from one's experiences they serve as ongoing data and opportunities for further reflexive interpretation and phronetic engagement with others.

Narrative Two: Relating with Practical Judgement

After the board meeting I was feeling somewhat excluded from the group and to continue my participation at work I recognized the need to improve my relationships with the directors. A week or two after the events described in the above narrative I was in another, less formal, meeting with the directors in which Barbara wasn't present. As I anticipated this meeting I saw that it might be a good opportunity to try to explain how I was feeling. On previous occasions I had been part of conversations with other directors when they had also voiced their frustration or confusion as to how things were going for them that sounded similar to how I was feeling. As we had previously discussed the idea of vulnerability (as I have described in project two) I took up that theme and explained to the group that I was feeling unsure about how to do my job and that I was struggling to understand how best to take forward the work of the change programme with Barbara and the board. This met with a sympathetic response from the group. Sharon explained that she often felt the same. Michael also said that he felt unsure because we were changing how we were working together in response to our new roles and relationships.

Since that meeting Sharon and I have become much closer and I have been discussing with her how she is reshaping her department. I have also worked closely with Terry in developing a better approach to the digital changes we are making in the organisation with the result that I will now take up the leadership of that work for the group. Feeling encouraged by the response of the directors I also had a meeting with Barbara where I expressed to her how I was feeling unsure about how to proceed. We had a very open discussion in which she said that she wanted me to play a more active and visible role with the directors. She said that she had seen me do so in the previous work in developing cost reduction plans and felt that I had not been so visible since. I agreed with her and suggested that I would take the opportunity of resetting my annual objectives to reflect her request and that would give her the opportunity to hold me accountable for how I was responding. I have since taken up the model that was drawn up by Barbara and I have used it to support our conversations and documentation of how we expect to make the organisational changes we are wanting. In addition, where the opportunity arises I take the opportunity to explore with others my differing views about organisations. This occurred recently when a colleague from

Africa explicitly made system assumptions about the organisation. He was arguing that in a future shape of the organisation the different country offices around the world represented parts to the system of the organisation as a whole and that we were looking for a way for those parts to interact differently. In taking this up with him in a coffee break I was able to have a discussion with him to explore those assumptions. At his request I have since sent him some of the literature I have been reading to further our interaction. In this way I hope to make some small impact on people's flexibility in thinking about organisational life.

Further Analysis

What I am trying to demonstrate in this further narrative is the interchange between my research and my practice. In sharing and reflecting on my narrative, and using literature to further my understanding, I have been able to engage with others at work with a new awareness of what I was doing. In trying to be reflexively aware of the situation I was in and the power dynamics and themes that were shaping the interaction between the people around me, I was able to do something different. I was aware of the call on us as individuals to show our vulnerability as a theme that had developed in our relating. So I was responding to that theme in my gestures to the directors and was able to call out in them the appreciative and sympathetic response I was looking for as an act of mutual recognition. As I chose to play the game I was also offering, as far as I could, a true explanation for how I was feeling and keeping the means and ends in view in terms of taking an ethical approach to my relationships. I see what I was doing as being as open as I could to the potential for mutual recognition and transformation in the situations I was finding myself in with the other directors and Barbara. Bourdieu (1991, pp179-180) argues that when one is involved in the political game, to avoid being excluded one must develop a feel for the game and adhere to it without arousing surprise to be recognized by others as competent and trustworthy. It is this feel for the game that I can see that I lacked in my interactions with the directors and trustees early in my first narrative. I surprised the group with my actions and as a consequence lost their trust. In my further narrative, as a consequence of my research, I have tried to demonstrate that my practice has been changing and that I have been able to exercise practical judgement as I have

continued to go about my work and attempt to be reflexively aware of the situation I was in. I was trying to be aware of instances when I might or might not collude with awareness with the assumptions and themes that were patterning the discourse and doing so ethically in the living present. Although I recognise that due to the complexity of the themes that may be at play in any given situation, my awareness of them was likely to have been partial. I'm not suggesting here that what I have described in this project is some kind of linear learning process for me as an individual, although I have clearly learned along the way. It is entirely possible that in a different context at a different time I will find myself in similar difficulties again. Hopefully, through this process of research I will be better equipped to continue my work if that happens.

Reflecting on my experience of the changing nature of my relationships with Barbara and the directors I would challenge Bourdieu's (1990) suggestion that the body always reproduces its habitus. As Burkitt (2014, p118) points out, we are reflective individuals interacting with other reflective individuals who may subtly refract and deflect social values. He argues that although we are constrained by our bodily habits (habitus), through our reflective consciousness we can learn new bodily practices that can result in changes in the ongoing gesture and response between interdependent people.

Conclusion

As I embarked on this project I was starting a new job and keen to make a good impression on those around me. I was entering into new relationships and old relationships were being changed because of my new position. In previous projects I had been developing the idea of functional collusion as being the unconscious or conscious repetition of patterns of relating in the maintenance of existing power relations. In this project I have deepened my understanding of what I mean by collusion and how my understanding of it differs from other researchers using the same or similar terms. I have also provided an explanation as to what I mean when I describe it as functional as a means of maintaining predictability in current power

relations. I have also pointed out how my thinking differs from other authors writing about organisational development and change.

The narrative I have explored was a meeting with trustees and directors in which the ways of relating had become repetitive and fairly fixed. In this project I have described how my actions in this board meeting, in trying to get the trustees to engage with each other in a different way by introducing a conversation about the power dynamics in the organisation, disrupted the expected ways of relating which led to confusion for trustees about what to do next. After managing to stumble through the process of the conversation I became partially excluded from the group. In subsequent meetings with directors this partial exclusion continued along with feelings of panic and shame. This was until the anxiety in the group was diminished by the chief executive bringing the group back to familiar patterns of relating with the development of a systems style model as was desired by the board of trustees.

I went on to explore, through the work of Bourdieu, the concept of habitus and how our identity is formed through our social experience of habitus in our ongoing interactions with others. I have pointed out how Bourdieu's habitus involves implicit collusion that constrains how people relate to each other and if necessary rectifies how people act in the maintenance of the habitus. This idea of rectification points to how power dynamics are an important factor in the continuation of patterns of relating. I have taken up the work of Foucault who argues that power is an inevitable part of human relating and how through discourse we come to understand what is true and the nature of knowledge. I took up this way of thinking to help me understand how my feelings of shame and guilt emerged as part of a disciplining process in the maintenance of power dynamics and the habitus of what was assumed to be true. This led to me feeling relieved as the chief executive instigated a return to familiar patterns of relating.

In exploring the events set out in the narrative I have deepened my understanding of how changes to patterns of relating can bring about instances of individually experienced feeling states. These feeling states are experienced as emotions in particular social experiences. I then suggested that emotions such as guilt and shame, as the individually felt responses to disciplining social processes, are important in the

formation and continuation of identity and habitus. The narrative clearly sets out the excluding social consequences for me of choosing not to collude.

I went on to explore what ethical implications there are to how we act, given that I am arguing that one can become more or less conscious of the patterns of relating in any given situation and therefore can make differing choices about what to do. In my consideration of ethics, I understand that one cannot know for certain the future implications about what one is doing and therefore the consideration of ethics cannot be about what will happen but needs to be about what is happening now and the anticipation of one's actions. Strategies of action one employs will inevitably involve competing 'goods'. In my case the desire for change was in competition with the anticipation of shame and the discomfort of anxiety. There is no doubt that exercising practical judgement in making choices about what to say and do involves compromise. As a small example, almost every day I notice people unreflectively using the word "mindset" to indicate ways of thinking. I understand the use of this phrase suggests assumptions of cognitive psychology but if I was to start a conversation to discuss their assumptions every time someone used the phrase, I wouldn't get very much else done. This then suggests that in paying attention to one's ongoing intentions as one reflexively responds to one's participation and the patterns of relating between people, one must make ethical choices about when to consciously collude and when not to. This has led to me being more comfortable in taking up the model designed by Barbara, that I described in my earlier narrative, in my ongoing work. I'm not suggesting that this compromise means giving up on one's intention. To take the living present seriously is to recognise that the future is unpredictable and one can compromise whilst keeping one's intentions in view. That is to take seriously Mead's (1934, p383) invocation to bring the ends into my intention.

In thinking about paying attention to one's ethical participation I take up the idea of what it means to make practical judgements. Practical judgement involves a wider awareness of the group and the organisational and societal patterns. I would argue that it will inevitably involve the potential for emotional discomfort that accompanies the potential for exclusion as one makes judgements about whether to collude or not with the power dynamics, ongoing assumptions and patterns of relating of any given situation. Again, this is with the understanding that the future is unknowable and the

implications of one's actions for oneself and for others, especially in attempting not to collude, cannot be known in advance. However, in developing one's capability in exercising practical judgement one can become more astute in one's political and power relating to stay in the game.

I then explained how I took this new understanding of ethics and practical judgement into my ongoing relationships with the directors at work. I also took up the theme of vulnerability that has played a part in shaping our power relating in sharing my own feelings of vulnerability with them. In this act of recognition I was able to become more included in the group. Sharing my own feelings of vulnerability seemed to change the dynamics of how we were all relating to each other as we found things in common that has facilitated my ongoing participation and made it easier for us to work together. Since then I have agreed with Barbara that I will seek individual conversations with directors to understand their aspirations for organisational change and what they might expect of me and my team in supporting them. It is my hope that we will be able to maintain the more open and mutually encouraging ways of relating we have been able to develop since the events described in the narratives above.

In this project I have tried to inquire into the paradoxical complexity of my experience of attempting to bring about change in an organisational context. In doing so I have worked hard to avoid thinking of organisations as systems and the separation of the individual and the social. Instead I have sought to maintain the perspective of organisations as imaginative constructs in people's minds and the individual and the social forming and being formed by each other in the context of local relating between people. As part of my argument is that much is dependent on context, I am not offering any prescription or advice for how organisational practitioners might go about making change happen. Nor am I arguing that becoming aware of collusive patterns of relating offers any guarantee of more successful management of change. Instead I have set out to reflexively understand and deepen my awareness of my experience as a practitioner in relation to others and, in turn, that deeper awareness has further shaped my practice. In sharing my work, I am inviting people to consider whether my experience resonates with theirs and in doing so to deepen their appreciation of their own practice.

Synopsis

Introduction

In this synopsis I will offer a further reflexive review of my research to take my analysis further. I want to explore the theme of functional collusion in the different settings and configurations of people as described in the four projects.

The setting out of my arguments will lead to a proposition for my contribution to knowledge and practice. In this synopsis I will also describe how I have managed my way through the ethical challenges of my research and the methods through which I've undertaken it.

The content and context of my research relates specifically to my experience in a particular international NGO in the UK. The organisation described in this thesis began as a response from the British and Irish churches for the need to reconstruct Europe after WWII. In 1964 there was a shift in emphasis in response to global famine and since that time the aim of the organisation has been the eradication of what is described in organisational literature as 'the scandal of poverty'. The organisation started out with a Christian ethos which continues to this day. Upon joining the organisation a number of people described the organisation as 'working with people of all faiths and none', a phrase that would also be used in corporate documentation. There were many professed Christian employees but there were also many who had little or no professed faith. As Head of Change I had a number of conversations with people who either thought the organisation was too Christian in its outlook or not Christian enough. Whilst people described this issue as problematic I experienced it as something of a healthy tension in the relationships between employees because as a consequence we were frequently required to reflect upon the issue of faith rather than take it for granted.

By contrast, throughout my time working in the organisation I was most struck by how those I was working with took for granted, perhaps as a new kind of faith, assumptions about strategic choice in discussions about how to prioritise the effort of employees towards achieving the organisational aims. I will take up two short

narratives to illustrate how such discussions took place. I will also analyse the narratives by looking at how they have relevance to the theme of functional collusion that I have been exploring in this thesis.

When I first started working for the organisation I took part in a number of activities intended to help me settle into my job. This was part of the employee induction process that all new starters had to go through. One of these was to attend a meeting with a number of other new starters that was being led by one of the directors. During this meeting the director explained the aims of the organisation and he spoke passionately about how there were enough resources in the world for everyone if they were fairly distributed and how proud he was to work for an organisation that was committed to making poverty a thing of the past. He also set out how the organisational departments and divisions disaggregated resources and made strategic plans in order to achieve the strategic aims. I was enthused by his speech, as were the other attendees, and in our conversations together afterwards we were all agreed that we had been positively affected by the meeting in terms of how we felt about working in the organisation. However, reflecting on the meeting now, the speech had the effect of minimising the opportunity for discussion about how achievable the aim of eradicating poverty really was or how we were meant to go about it. It seems to me to have had a similar rhetorical quality to the Christian reflection I refer to in project four. Rather than encouraging discussion, these speeches closed down the potential for reflection to take place. This rhetorical way of speaking seemed also to be taken up by other employees in everyday conversations so that the symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1992, pp163-183) of invoking the grand aims of the organisation had the effect of closing down the opportunity for anyone to bring the aims into question. It seemed to me that we were all expected to align with these aims without discussion or question. To raise questions or invite discussion was discouraged without anyone specifically saying so. I would argue that the rhetoric was being employed by people to discipline each other into colluding with the assumption that by working together we could deliver on the organisational aims.

More recently, a new Chief Executive has started working for the organisation. In a recent meeting with directors she has described the need to align the organisational strategy and to narrow the focus of how managers prioritise their efforts. Currently

the organisation has eight strategic priorities that set out the work that is being done in different national contexts around the world. The new Chief Executive has said that we need to reduce these priorities from eight to around three. In the discussion with directors this need to narrow the focus of these priorities seems to be taken for granted as an undisputedly good thing to do. In the past, before my research on this doctorate programme, I may have also taken up this view without question. However, there were clear assumptions of strategic choice theory (Stacey, 2007) in how the Chief Executive was expressing herself, assumptions that I have come to question in my research. In my experience these assumptions represent a pervasive organisational discourse. As I've said earlier in this thesis, Foucault (1977) describes how discourse limits how we are able to discuss what is going on in the world and creates the conditions for how people act in relation to each other which then continues to form discourse. Similar to the assumed need for a vision of change, there is also the assumption that narrowing the strategic focus of what people do in the organisation is not only possible but will inevitably result in an improvement in the organisation's ability to eradicate poverty. People regularly used the metaphor of eating an elephant in small chunks, where the aim of eradicating poverty is the elephant and our everyday tasks are the small chunks. Even if one is aware of these assumptions there seems to be little choice but to collude with them if one is to continue to be included.

In these circumstances managers in countries far away from where these priorities have been set have to find ways of working within the strictures of such assumptions and still respond to the contexts in which they find themselves. In private conversations with managers in Africa they have explained to me how they find themselves having to make choices when there are a number of competing good actions to take. They talk of worrying about keeping their staff employed and maintaining the size of their team through taking on work that doesn't fit within the priorities of the organisation. They then describe how they have to provide explanations for what they are doing to their managers to satisfy them that they are still working within the parameters that have been set. This results in a public explanation for what these managers are doing that is separate and different from how they privately talk about it. In trying to make sense of class divisions in a Malay village, Scott (1990) differentiates between a public and a hidden discourse and describes how those without power make use of disguise and concealment, which

“requires an experimental spirit and a capacity to test and exploit all the loopholes, ambiguities, silences, and lapses available to them” (ibid, p138). I would argue that the managers in Africa were doing something similar. They seemed to be able to do what they wanted in their particular context as long as they were able to provide an adequate explanation as to how it fitted with the organisational priorities. In private discussions, individual directors would readily admit that they knew that managers were doing this but in the more formal meetings it seemed that they would pretend otherwise. I would describe this as a form of collusion, that has emerged undiscussed and that has the function of publicly maintaining the illusion of strategic choice whilst dealing with the pragmatic reality of managers having to make things work in their own context.

I have also found that my description of functional collusion is recognisable to those working in other NGOs as well as the UK community of organisational development practitioners more generally, as I describe in my contribution to knowledge. I will now go on to summarise and further reflect on each project, before drawing together my main arguments.

Project One

At the beginning of my work on the DMan programme, project one represented an exploration of how I came to be who I am. In delving into my background and work experiences I was looking for significant patterns that might have emerged in how I have related with others at work. Initially I was especially interested in how I took up assumptions about power and control and how they affected my relationships with other people and their relationships with each other. Through this process I wanted to discover what might be at the heart of my inquiry on this DMan programme. I was looking for examples in my working life when I felt challenged or conflicted by what had happened. According to Brinkmann (2012, p3), taking everyday experiences seriously as a source of inquiry not only helps to get a clearer view of what was going on, it can also offer some illumination on larger social issues that play out in more generalisable social patterns of relating.

I started with a narrative about a time when I found it hard to decide what to do, faced as I was with a situation where the organisational policy might have constrained me from doing what I deemed to be ethical. I was working with senior police officers as a representative of the UK immigration department during a tragic incident. Twenty-two people had lost their lives having been stuck on sandbanks by a rising tide. A piece of equipment at my disposal had the potential to help identify the bodies of the people who had drowned. However, the policy on the use of such equipment dictated that it shouldn't be used to identify dead bodies. It felt like a double bind (a familiar organisational pattern as explained by Mowles, 2015, p14): if I used the equipment I was acting against policy and could face disciplinary action, and if I did not use it I could have been deemed as having been unhelpful by police colleagues and prolonged the time it would take to identify the people who had died.

As I come towards the end of my research, I understand this narrative to be about me exercising practical judgement, (Stacey, 2015, pp56-57) rather than blindly following rules. Since decision-making inevitably pertains to particular moments in time, because circumstances are often unforeseen, I would argue that practical judgement rather than simple implementation of decontextualized rules is what is needed, which includes having to interpret the rules in one's particular situation. In the decision to disobey the policy I was clearly deciding what to do without the understanding I now have of practical judgement and without understanding ethics in the way that I now do. At that time I would have understood ethics as being tested against some external and universal standard that was enfolded into the policies that were provided to guide and direct me as a type of formative teleology (Stacey et al, 2000, p27). This led to feelings of anxiety about my decisions, linked to my difficulties in following a policy that didn't support me or give me an answer to my dilemma. I felt that to act ethically in the circumstances in which I found myself I would have to disregard the policy. In contravening it I found a way to continue relating with others successfully in very difficult circumstances and yet I felt that in some way I had not performed well. What I see now, that I couldn't see then, is that I was part of a much broader pattern of social relating between those of us working in the immigration department, and between immigration staff and police officers more generally. Through participating in those patterns of relating I personally accepted perceptions of underperformance in

the organisation as part of how I saw myself. These perceptions emerged from the expectations of politicians for the removal of failed asylum seekers from the UK that related to a zero sum, balancing the number of immigrants coming to the UK with the number leaving. Such an expectation paid little or no attention to the practicalities or morality of what was needed to achieve it. What I didn't write in Project one, because I couldn't see its significance while writing it, was that at the time of this incident the UK immigration department was seen as a failure (the Minister had publicly stated that the department was not fit for purpose) and was under significant pressure to remove what many (including me) thought of as impossibly high numbers of failed asylum seekers from the country. I was managing a number of teams who were tasked with these removals and we had large targets to achieve. I was expected to achieve these targets by senior managers who in turn were expected to deliver them by politicians who had made public commitments about them. The delivery of these targets was monitored and reported on all the way up to senior Ministers as though it were a cybernetic system (Stacey et al, 2000, p65). There seemed no opportunity, other than in local gossip, to discuss whether such targets were even achievable let alone the ethical implications of what we were trying to do. I felt a sense of failure and anxiety which now, looking back, I assume was also felt by large numbers of my colleagues because of the cultural processes people, employed by the organisation, engaged in. It is this that Bourdieu (2000) or Elias (2000) might understand as the *habitus* (described in detail in project four, pp99-104) of the Border Agency. I would argue that it was unconsciously colluding by unthinkingly going along with the assumptions that were at play, without any discussion of them, that led to the maintenance of a pattern of relating. To have questioned them would have risked conflict and probably would have been perceived as a defensive reaction.

Further in project one I relate another narrative from my time with the immigration department when I was tasked with the management of a national response to the unplanned release of a large number of foreign national prisoners. This release of prisoners had caused a furore in the national press, as another example of the failure of the immigration department, culminating in the resignation of the senior Minister, a consequence of him saying something in Parliament that turned out to be untrue. Clearly, in the rapidly shifting situation it would have been impossible for the Minister to have had the control that was expected of him. Yet there was a public

expectation, demonstrated in the national press and media commentary, that Ministers should be in control of what occurs in their departments. The public view of what was going on seemed to be that the Minister was either deliberately lying, or lacked control of his department, and either perspective suggested his incompetence. I described how events such as these influenced me so that I took up assumptions about managers needing to be in control into my relationships with those I was managing. This produced an inability to meet my expectations of my own competence as a manager and that led me to feel frustrated, anxious, ashamed and incompetent. In retrospect this seems to be more evidence of me colluding with an organisational pattern of perceiving underperformance and taking it to myself. These circumstances eventually influenced me to change my job. On re-reading project one, the theme of shame as a response to my own feelings of incompetence (an issue that I explore much more deeply in later projects) was already present. One can also see reflected in this narrative how a failure to deliver the expected performance by the Minister resulted in his being publicly judged as incompetent. I now think of this judgement of competence as both an individual and social process at the same time. In retrospect I can see here that I am starting to see how judgements of competence are a contextual and ongoing social process rather than something innate in an individual.

To give a recent example of how judgements of competence can arise, when I took up my job as head of change I brought together a number of people to form a change team. One particular member of the team, Julie, had the job of helping colleagues engage with the change process that was being proposed. In a number of meetings we argued about the need for what she described as a compelling vision. I argued for us to allow the idea of the organisation moving towards becoming a global partnership to develop as we engaged with people across the organisation. Julie felt strongly that as the change team it was our job to develop a vision that would excite people and get them to feel positive about the changes that were being proposed. I got a strong sense that Julie felt that without this vision people would think I, and the change team, weren't competent to lead the change process. I recognised that a vision may be what people would be expecting, and the absence of one may cause some people anxiety because we weren't being clear about the final state of the changed organisation, but I also felt that we couldn't possibly know what the final state would be and I wanted to involve as many people as possible to allow them to play a part in creating it.

Throughout the two years of us working together Julie and I regularly argued about this issue. I think we were both interested in helping the organisation make the changes happen and we were both concerned with what was best for the people working in the organisation.

I want to be clear that I'm not predicting that the outcome was better because we didn't have a vision, it may well have been an easier route to take and may or may not have resulted in more engagement from employees. However, as I've described in project four, to act ethically means taking the living present seriously and recognising that the future is unpredictable. I think it is ethically dubious for a small number of people to try to decide how the future will be because the call on others to align with such visions can mask the politics and power relating that take place in such activities (Griffin, 2002). I wanted to take up Mead's (1934, p383) invocation to bring the ends into my intention. I was very reluctant to collude with the perceived need for a vision, even if it may have been easier for people to go along with and it was clear to me that Julie considered me less competent as a leader because of my not doing so. I think what I'm describing here is what Foucault (1977) described as discourse in which a particular way of discussing the world creates how people act in relation to each other that then continues to form discourse. I have found the idea of the need for a vision of change to be ubiquitous in my organisation as a discourse through which we discipline ourselves and others. This is a different view to how writers such as Senge (1990) write about 'vision'. Senge reifies the organisation as a system and argues for an alignment between the 'vision' of the organisation and that of the individual. In doing so Griffin (2002) argues that Senge is suggesting a "participation in a systemic whole of a transcendental or metaphysical kind" (ibid, p48) and I am in agreement with Griffin (ibid, p48) that it is because Senge employs systems thinking that there is a need for a metaphysical answer as to what is outside of the systemic whole that is being posited. Such thinking leads to an argument for the eradication of power relating between individuals because it is seen as a barrier to the ideal of alignment, whereas Elias (1998, p116) argues that power relating is a characteristic of all human relating. As Flyvbjerg, who takes up the work of Foucault, writes, "the neglect of power is unfortunate, because it is precisely by paying attention to power relations that we may achieve more democracy" (2001, p98).

To return to my reflection on project one, I went on to explain how I changed jobs and completed an MSc in People and Organisational Development. I was looking for answers to my questions about management and leadership and through that Masters process I took up individualistic, humanistic and systemic assumptions of what it means to develop people and organisations. These assumptions included the idea that one could plan and predict how others would respond to attempts to change how they think and act and that such attempts were ethically justifiable in pursuit of organisational and individual alignment, as argued for by Senge (1990). Even though the programme of study called for critical thinking, I experienced little challenge to these assumptions. Everyone around me in this Master's programme, including the faculty, seemed to take these assumptions for granted. I would now argue that such ways of thinking are indicative of the community of organisational development practitioners being a thought collective with a particular thought style (Fleck, 1979). My encountering of the DMan, which has emerged as a different thought collective with a very different thought style – one that involves reflecting on our own thought style – enabled me to reflect on, and notice my participation in and maintenance of, the organisational development collective thought style.

Towards the end of project one I related a narrative about a particular piece of work in which I used the Burke-Litwin organisational model (Burke and Litwin, 1992) to win favour with a powerful group. The first time I wrote about it I felt that my actions were somewhat unethical given that I didn't believe in the systemic assumptions that underpin the model. However, when I returned to this narrative later in project four, I developed a more nuanced perspective of the ethics of using 'tools'. Although the use of such models still makes me uneasy, I can see that making choices about tools and techniques is another example of the need for me exercising practical judgment in maintaining my engagement with the group with which I was working. The assumptions of the group involved a belief in the usefulness of such models including that through their use one could get predictable outcomes that would improve organisational effectiveness. To avoid exclusion, and to be seen as competent and have some influence in this group, it was necessary for me to collude with these assumptions. I take up this example later in project four because it represents an example of the symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1989) of using such models in circumstances when I knew the systemic assumptions underlying them are taken for

granted. In relating this work in project one I felt a sense of unease with the ethics of a situation in which I did not entirely share the assumptions of the group but relied on them to get others to look favourably on the work I was doing. As a result of my work on project four I recognise that one can find oneself using such models to stay included and to have influence on what is going on and that the ethics in such situations have to be judged according to the circumstances that pertain to that particular context. Such collusion, whilst it may have been frustrating for me on occasion, may well have a function in supporting the ongoing work in a group. The ethical judgement I would make as a result of my research would be to try to be reflexively aware of what I was seeking to gain in such interactions, for both me and others, by keeping both the means and ends in view (Mowles, 2012). Returning to the Burke-Litwin example, I was relieved when the gestures from the chair of the group suggested that she was impressed by my use of the model and this gave me more room for manoeuvre in developing my proposals for change. I felt some responsibility to the manager who had contracted me to do this work, as it formed an important part of his ongoing intentions to improve how his part of the organisation was performing. I had a strong sense that the group to which I was presenting was influential in how that work would be perceived and I wanted to support him as an ally and in turn for him to continue to involve me. What I'm trying to point to here is that the ethics of the situation were emerging as part of the ongoing process of gesture and response. My practical judgement involved assessing how best to manage my way through this to continue my work and my relationships with those in the room and beyond.

Throughout project one I talked about outcomes unfolding from people relating. However, talking of outcomes suggests an end point and, perhaps, that enfolded within processes of relating is something (an outcome) that then emerges in a formative teleology (Stacey et al, 2000). Of course, interaction does lead to consequences for those involved. Those consequences lead to further interaction with further consequences, and so it goes on as a continuous process in which we make moment-to-moment moral choices about the consequences that are emerging. To give an example of how assumptions of formative causality get taken up in my experience at work, I recently helped facilitate a conference that brought managers from across the world together to discuss the idea of moving our organisation to become a global partnership. The conference was arranged without a formal agenda and the intention

was to have a session at the beginning of the conference in which the participants could decide what they wanted to discuss. The absence of agenda seemed to cause some of the directors anxiety and they wanted to understand what the objectives of the conference were. They asked questions about what outcomes we were looking to deliver through the conference (the assumption was clearly that we could design an agenda that would assure us of the outcomes we wanted). During the conference I participated in a number of conversations in which managers were clearly changing how they perceived their relationships with each other in response to the idea of this global partnership. It is this changing of how we think as we relate to each other that I now consider as creating the potential for organisational change, by which I mean changes to patterns of relating. However, at the end of the conference there was a meeting at which directors and trustees intended to discuss the outcomes of the conference. There followed a discussion about how we could create documents that would describe the different organisational models as options for change that could be discussed in a future board meeting, as if they were the outcomes of the conference. I recognised this as a way of shifting the pattern of power relating back to one in which the board of trustees would consider options and decide what should be done (much as was expected of me in project four). However, I found myself agreeing (although I was privately reluctant) to write such documents and to present them to the board of trustees. I was reluctant because I felt that there was the potential for a broader change that could take place. I wanted to find a way to continue to engage the wider group of attendees of the conference in the decision-making. Yet I agreed with the proposal because I thought that attempting to withhold the expected ways of being together may have resulted in me being excluded or disciplined in some way. So, whilst I could hold open the potential for different power relating by successfully engaging a larger group in deciding what we should discuss at the conference, it also seemed necessary for me to collude with the assumptions at play in this group in the recognition and maintenance of the ongoing power relationships.

The events described in the narratives in project one are examples of circumstances where I found myself unconsciously colluding with ideas of formative teleology and management control that led to me feeling individually incompetent and inadequate. In becoming an organisational development practitioner I further took up systemic models, such as the Burke Litwin model (1992), to gain influence in groups who

shared an assumption that tools and techniques based on systems thinking offered solutions for organisational challenges. Looking back on the narratives in project one I think I would describe what I was doing as making practical judgements in my ongoing interactions with others rather than seeing my actions coming from rational choices made by me as an autonomous individual. Upon writing this I am reminded of an example from my early career as an immigration officer at London's Heathrow Airport. I was called to examine the passports of an Iranian Minister and his entourage. All was well with most of the group as they held the required visas that were mandatory for visitors from Iran. However, the Minister's butler did not have a visa. This was a clear-cut case as the immigration rules stated that the butler should be refused entry to the UK and removed back to Iran on the earliest available flight. I conveyed this message to the Minister and said that I would consult with my manager and return with a decision. The Minister became agitated and suggested that if I attempted to send the butler back to Iran, rather than allow him to stay for the intended visit for a week, he would complain to the Home Office Minister in the UK. I consulted with my manager and explained that I thought we should go ahead and send the butler home to Iran as that was what the rules said we should do. However, my manager asked me a number of questions about how long the group intended to stay and what the Iranian Minister had said. My manager decided that we should refuse the butler entry to the UK as per the rules but rather than send the him home on the earliest available flight we should allow him to temporarily enter the UK for a week to allow him to carry out his duties with the Minister. I agreed to this course of action but at the time I was angry that the rules were being bent for this Iranian Minister. However, I can see that from my manager's point of view, the best course of action was to find a way to exercise discretion (or practical judgement) and to find a way to apply the rules but to minimise the political and practical difficulties for the people involved. The outcome of the interaction between the Iranian Minister, my manager, and me was uncertain. The immigration rules didn't offer an adequate solution and simply following them might have been unhelpful at the very least. Rowe (2012), who takes up Lipsky (1980) in exploring front line exercise of discretion in public services, also argues that it is important to,

...understand our context, but also that centrally we understand ourselves, even as academics, as individuals, with ethical standards and codes, exercising

a degree of agency in ways that can significantly affect the lives of others (Rowe, 2012, p17).

I see this short narrative about my early work in the immigration department as an example of how one finds oneself in situations where one has to solve problems or dilemmas. Midgeley, (2000) offers a way of thinking about how people can go about making such decisions. He assumes that to take action people need to find a solution to a systemic problem. To do this we must engage in what he calls boundary judgements. These social and personal boundaries at the edges of first and second order systems help us understand what is important in our decision-making (ibid, pp128-129). For Midgeley, widening our understanding of the systems in which we are embedded is key to decision making. A first-order boundary judgement is one in which the consideration of the relationships that are involved is taken up and the second-order boundary judgement means considering the views of others not directly involved but who are important because they will be affected by our choice of action. Clearly this could lead to endless consideration of further boundary judgements but Midgeley suggests that will not happen because at some point we have to take action. It seems to me that Midgeley is assuming that people are autonomous strategic decision makers for whom thinking and action is separated. In addition he ascribes agency to the systems he describes,

...what constitutes a human agent is not necessarily a simple matter to identify. Actions can be ascribed to a variety of possible agents: e.g., an individual person; a group; a team; a family; an organisation; a community; a nation; etc (ibid, p113).

My experience of organisational life suggests that Midgeley's way of thinking about problem solving is common and often shows up in the design and use of flow-charts to help managers follow organisational policies.

Taking up this way of thinking in solving the problem of the Iranian butler without a visa would have involved me, and then my manager, independently and maybe together considering the boundary judgements that were necessary to understand our own perspective, those of the Iranian Minister and his entourage, and further then to

the immigration managers and politicians in the UK. We would also have had to ascribe agency to the perspective of the UK Immigration Agency as an organisation and even perhaps the UK Government and the UK as a nation. Having taken all of these matters into consideration, we may then have been in a position to take action. I find this problematic because although I would argue a good decision was made by my manager, the process I was involved in seemed to me to have a dynamic and emergent quality in which my interactions with the butler and the Iranian Minister led to further interaction with my boss which then led to further interaction with the Minister and the butler and so on. There may well have been some thinking about what the consequences for others beyond the situation may have been, but it was never explicitly discussed other than the political threat from the Iranian Minister to involve the Home Office Minister. I can imagine that the threat could have been influential in my manager's consideration but was never mentioned by him as having affected his decision. On reflection I think this was because, in anticipation of any future challenge to the decision, it was important for my manager and me to collude in the idea that we were still, in essence, following the immigration rules rather than reacting and responding to political threats. However, any pre-designed flow chart could not have foreseen our specific situation or adequately given us advice about the subtle political nuances involved. We did not follow any orderly process of thinking, as suggested by Midgeley. Instead I think we were making practical judgements about what to do in the living present, given our understanding of history and our anticipation of the future. Perhaps Midgeley, from a systems perspective, is arguing for a reflexive response to the situations we find ourselves in but in doing so I find that he loses the fundamentally emergent and interdependent character of human interaction. Also, as I have previously said, I think of organisations as imaginative constructs that constrain and enable our interactions and I find the idea of ascribing agency to them problematic.

The events I was describing in project one set the scene for my research into functional collusion in the avoidance of shame and that shame is a social process that is individually felt. I now see shame as part of the social processes that discipline and form an individual through feeling states that we interpret as emotions. I have taken up shame in particular in my research as it has played such a large part in my learning.

Project Two

In project two I gave an account of a team meeting between my chief executive and her group of directors that I facilitated. I explored what we mean by facilitation and how facilitated events often include very specific agendas with planned outcomes. They include the use of individualizing tools and techniques, such as psychometric instruments like Myers Briggs type indicator (which I described in detail in project two). I proposed that when we engage with others in facilitated events we take up individualistic and formative assumptions in thinking that one can fold predictable outcomes into their planning. I argue that such assumptions often go unchallenged and un-noticed and, consequently, any failure to achieve the predicted outcomes is blamed on the facilitator. I go on to suggest that such facilitated events are examples of what Mead (1938) describes as social objects. My description of a social object in project two feels bounded and systemic, as if it is a thing that has a clear beginning, middle and end, and yet I think the social object is a much more complex and ongoing phenomenon that emerges from people relating locally with each other and in which global themes are then taken up.

A social object is the social acts of individuals which create recognizable patterns in social life, like a workshop or a planning meeting. So, a social object is to society what a natural object is to the natural world. A social act is an act in which the individual takes the attitude of the generalised other towards himself (Mead, 1934, p155),

So the self reaches its full development by organizing these individual attitudes of others into the organized social or group attitudes, and by thus becoming an individual reflection of the general systematic pattern of social or group behavior in which it and the others are all involved (ibid, p158).

The concept of a facilitated away day, the practice of facilitation and the use of

psychometric instruments, have all emerged out of an individualistic and humanistic habitus and discourse, forming the social object as a process that is recognizable to the participants as they interact to maintain it. In project two I was developing an understanding that my participation as a facilitator involved making practical judgements to stay included and to encourage inquiry into the assumptions we were all making.

In the narrative in project two, whilst facilitating the group of directors there were moments when I tried to bring attention to the way the group was relating. One of these moments happened when I asked what the joking had been about as the group entered the room and another when I suggested we inquire into their use of mythical language. In these moments the participants in the group paused but seemed unable or unwilling to reflect on what they were doing together. The pivotal part of my making sense of what was going on in project two was when discussing my narrative with my learning set and supervisors; it became clear that I had been unwittingly participating in the infantilisation of the group I was working with. I felt shocked and ashamed about what I had been doing. The shame was double-edged. Firstly, I was hit by the revelation that I had been unwittingly colluding with the directors in their infantilisation, and secondly that I hadn't noticed it until it had been pointed out to me. On reflection my shame is partly in response to high expectations of myself in my ability to understand what is going on in any given situation. I find it difficult not to hold myself responsible for being able to predict the outcomes of what is going on. My inability to do so leads me to feeling shame, as if I am underperforming in some way. I think this shows how difficult it can be to notice the assumptions one takes up as one is formed by one's habitus.

I became interested in shame as a social process and went on to explore it in more detail. I came to understand shame to be a necessary element in significant learning (Aram, 2001). However, in taking up this idea at the time of writing project two, I think I was conceptualising the experience of shame in learning as a single event, as if one could learn something from a shameful experience and never repeat the same mistake. There are hints here of me holding onto ideas of mental models related to cognitivist psychology. Mental models are internal concepts and schemas of the external world (Stacey, 2007, p83). Perhaps I still carry the assumption that I can

change the way I think merely by surfacing how I was thinking and deciding to change it. I am persuaded by Bourdieu's (2000) argument that we are the embodiment of our habitus and it's not so easy to just decide to think differently. In addition, each new social situation brings with it new patterns of relating to pay attention to, so previous learning cannot simply be applied to new experiences.

Further in project two I went on to explore the possibility that the function of collusion could be that it enables groups to avoid shame arising in their relating together. On reflection I also recognise that there may have been other processes at play in the events described in my project two narrative, including perhaps the avoidance of potential power struggles that could have led to conflict. However, the experience of shame was in the foreground for me at that time. The process of noticing and reflecting on what was going on for me was uneven and unpredictable. At times I felt stuck, unable to think my way through what was going on in my experience, and at other times my understanding came quickly. The movement of my thinking was happening through the interacting with my learning set and my supervisors and was still going on when I wrote this synopsis. I think this is an important point to make in support of the method we use in the DMan programme. Whilst this thesis necessarily has a start and an end point, the method assumes that we are interdependent and that knowledge continuously emerges from our conversational activity and from reflecting on our practice both as individuals and in groups.

In summing up project two my exploration of my experience as a facilitator started the process of me becoming aware of what I came to describe as functional collusion. Reflecting on my experience of working with the group of directors brought to my attention the difficulties of exposing the patterns of relating going on in groups. Aram (2001) argues that shame arises in processes of significant learning due to the identity threat involved and the unpredictability of how one's identity will be changed as a consequence. Through my experience set out in project two I came to agree and I further came to understand that people in groups collude with each other, often without awareness, to avoid the experience of shame and to maintain ongoing patterns of power relating.

In my experience this idea of collusion represents a very different way of thinking about how people and organisations may change and develop. As I have been writing this synopsis I have been asked to support one of my colleague directors, Michael, in bringing his team together. They are a new team in the organisation and they are not used to working as a group. He expressed the view that one of his team would struggle with the new ways of working he wanted to promote. Michael wanted his team to improve their flexibility so that they could deploy people on projects according to need. Michael said that Andrew was reluctant to accept these new ways of working and instead argued that he wanted to be left to manage his own team and that he could be trusted to deliver on his own. Michael said that Andrew needed to change his mindset, so that he could fit in with the new team, and wanted me to help with that. As Michael and I were having this conversation I was thinking about a number of things. By assuming that he could change Andrew's mental models so that he could be more effective, it was clear that Michael was making cognitive assumptions about how people think that I didn't share (Stacey, 1997, pp83-84). As I was talking to Michael I was also thinking about Bourdieu's (2000) description of habitus and my developing understanding that our judgement about competence arises from the unspoken assumptions that have emerged in our particular habitus, but also that some individuals are more competent than others. Thus, competence is both individual and social at the same time. I said to Michael that it is likely that Andrew's experience had led him to habitually respond in a certain way and that he may well find it difficult to change quickly. I also suggested that rather than just being about Andrew, surely it was also important for the whole team to discuss how they might work together. By saying this I was trying to point to the importance of the social processes involved. Michael seemed to like my explanation and we went on to discuss how we might take up this idea of habits to facilitate a conversation with the team to discuss what it might be like for them to work in the way that Michael wanted and how they might do it.

I wanted to set out this short narrative as an example of how my practice is changing in response to how my thinking is changing. In this exchange with Michael I think I was trying to respond in ways that allowed me to hold true to what I think and to try to find an appropriate language to convey that to Michael. At the same time I wanted to help with the challenge that he was facing. I was aware at the time that the

conversation with Michael involved meaning emerging from the gesture and response between us, as described by Mead (1934, p179), as we discussed how we might work together. I have come to understand this as the ongoing process involved in the exercise of reflexive practical judgement that seems to have a paradoxical quality of predictable unpredictability (Mowles, 2015, pp98-119). By this I mean that the exercise of practical judgement requires one to try to anticipate the responses of others when we may be unable to predict how we will behave ourselves. We are always trying to understand what is going on and deciding what to do in response to the gestures of others, all of us acting in the living present.

Project Three

I began project three contrasting functional collusion with Alvesson and Spicer's (2012) idea of functional stupidity. In both phenomena there is sometimes an absence of reflexivity, at least by most of the participants, but always a lack of discussion or agreed action to address the stupidity/collusion. So functional stupidity may well entail collusion but not necessarily the other way around. Collusion, in contrast to how I have described it, is often seen in organisational literature in pejorative terms as an undesirable aspect of people secretly working together to gain an advantage over others. I am arguing that the functionality of collusion is to enable people to go on relating with each other with minimum need to think about what they are doing, maintain existing power differentials or to avoid shame. I understand that Alvesson and Spicer used the word stupidity to convey their critical standpoint as the word clearly has negative connotations and yet they are pointing to a form of stupidity as having a function in organisations. In my use of the word collusion I am trying to make a similar, but not identical, argument. As I've said, collusion is often taken up as synonymous with conspiracy, as a negative aspect of people seeking to get an advantage by nefarious means. However, I am pointing to how a form of collusion might have a function for supporting people in their ongoing relating. I am not saying that collusion is universally necessarily good or bad as that would surely depend on the context. Rather than assuming people are up to no good in colluding with each other, I am suggesting that such activity can give people a sense of continuity and predictability in their social relationships.

There are two important factors in what I am describing as collusion. The first is that the contextual history is key to understanding how, without planning or discussion, collusion emerges and is maintained in groups and communities. The second is the importance that such collusion goes on being undiscussed because bringing collusive patterns of relating into our conversations disables our ability to continue the collusion. Consider the example of the Emperor's new clothes. If the Emperor, realising that he is naked, was to discuss it with the people present, the collusion that he is fully clothed could no longer continue and feelings of shame would surely have followed as people recognised their collusive participation.

Turning to the empirical basis of my project three, I noticed that there was something about the collusive nature of the job interview process, and the high stakes involved, that seemed to bring about a more ritualized way of relating together. Until I embarked on my research on this DMan programme I hadn't paid much attention to what was going on in job interviews and now I found myself noticing and reflexively inquiring into them. In my narrative I described how I negotiated what I should say to have the best chance of getting the job whilst also being honest about what I thought about change in an organisational context. It is clear that even before the interview I was becoming aware of the choices I was making as I was becoming increasingly conscious of the collusion I was co-creating. In getting to grips with how such collusion, and ritualized ways of behaving, came about I pointed to how the formal and written rules governing interviews in my organisation have become increasingly detailed over time.

Human resources scholars (see Arvey and Campion, 1982) have long been interested in the validity of job interviews and specialist practitioners tend to justify rules on the grounds of aiming for equal opportunities and the eradication of bias. This has the result of attempting to remove emotions too, as they are seen as the cause of irrational and flawed decision making. However, it was clear to me from my own experience that it is impossible to remove my emotions from my decisions about what to do. This is supported by the work of Damasio (2000) that I explored in project four, who argues that the areas of our brains that are responsible for deciding what to do are physiologically intertwined with our emotional experience. In contrast to ideas of

rational decision-making being dependent on the eradication of emotion, Damasio (ibid, pp40-41) found that brain damage that removes the ability to emotionally respond leads to difficulties in making decisions. He goes on to argue that feelings and emotions are essential to our ability to make sensible choices. This is in contrast to authors such as Derous et al (2016) who, writing from a human resource studies perspective, separate people's ability to make rational decisions from those decisions that involve bias and emotions. Derous et al seem to me to be assuming a technical form of rationality that separates us from our emotions, which in my experience is often taken up in the rules for interviewing that are written by human resource specialists. Instead, rather than making strategic decisions in seeking to predict the future performance of a job applicant, in interview situations we are always trying to work with a combination of adherence to the rules, getting what we want and trying to be fair to the other people involved. The interview is an example of a highly political process where plenty is at stake for all participants, so it is important that the process is perceived as 'fair' and that the losers, if there are any, accept the result.

Goffman (1959, pp23-24) and Simmel (1906, pp450-451) are helpful for understanding the performative nature of how people interact. Goffman explains how it is necessary for individuals to give an expected and consistent performance in fulfillment of specific roles and that it is a social process rather than performance being just about individual choices. Simmel points to how our competence in the eyes of others is dependent on our performance in any given context, which also supports the argument that what we understand as competent is both individual and social at the same time. Performance is not only individual, it is also social in that the meaning of the performance emerges from the gestures and responses between the people involved. If a participant in the interview fails to give the expected performance then the competence of such an individual could be called into question, both by themselves and others.

Elias' (2000) description of the civilizing process supports a theoretical understanding of how the rules and rituals of job interviews in the UK in both the civil service and in the voluntary sector have come about. Elias uses the example of the post-medieval French court to suggest that people's understanding of what is appropriate in public life changes as society changes. Influenced by this idea of movement of ethics in

social processes, we can see the importance of history in how the rules pertaining to job interviews have emerged over time in the standardisation of human resource practice. In the UK, human resource functions in organisations grew out of increasing regulation that was intended to protect women and children at work. Personnel management was used as a term for the development of employment policies that were understood to be able to influence organisational productivity and the profession of personnel management emerged, taking up ideas from social sciences about motivation and organisational behaviour. Specialisms began to develop alongside increasing uses of selection testing. Influenced by ideas from the USA people moved away from thinking in terms of personnel management and started to use the term ‘human resources’ which suggests thinking in terms of people being an asset or resource for organisations (CIPD, 2016). In this increasing bureaucratic development of policies, assumptions from strategic choice theory and research in the social science were taken up leading to the emergence of what I experienced as a generally accepted method of conducting job interviews in the UK public and third sector. What I am taking from Elias is an historical theory about social change – in this case assisting me to trace over time how assumptions, such as thinking of people possessing cognitive skillsets and as resources and assets of organisations, have been taken for granted in HR practice. In the organisations in which I have worked an implicit assumption has emerged that human resource specialists have the power to set out, in the policies that they write, how we must all behave in interview situations.

I relate this to collusion by arguing that even if one perceives such rules as interpretable, one is obliged to essentially maintain them as one improvises one’s actions to continue to be considered as competent in the interview situation and to avoid the risk of shame and exclusion. I was aware of choosing what I was saying so that the interview could be successfully concluded. If I had acted outside of the rules there was a risk that the interviewers would not have been able to make a claim that they had ensured an equitable interview process, because we would have broken the rules for interviewing as they were set out in the organisational policy. These conclusions later influenced me to delve further in project four into what might occur when one tries to change how people relate together.

Before moving to project four, I will further clarify my argument set out in project three. The functional nature of collusion in job interviews entails the maintenance of the status quo in how people interact together. Through researching HR processes relating to job interviews I broadened my understanding that such collusion emerges from the interaction between many people over time and the assumptions that underpin it become embedded in rules and policies that become more or less unarguable. Since the 1970's philosophers, sociologists and anthropologists have been pointing to the continual emergence of traditions in contrast to a view of culture as static. But continuities are also found in culture, whether in organisations or wider societies. I found Bourdieu's (1977) concept of *doxa* persuasive as an explanation for how assumptions come to be taken for granted. Bourdieu explains that a custom or tradition emerges over time in the way people commonly speak. He describes this as *doxa* when it is something that is taken for granted by the majority of people and there is little support for it being anything but naturally true. *Doxa* emerges, undiscussed over time through people relating together. Such a custom or tradition "goes without saying because it comes without saying" (ibid, p167). When an argument is made against it, *doxa* may come to be considered as orthodox because there then exists an unorthodox argument against it. Rather than being a universal truth, *doxa* emerges over time and comes to be thought of as being the truth. In project three I describe the individualistic and systemic assumptions that get taken up by the HR and organisational development community that rarely get discussed or challenged. I would argue that such assumptions are representative of a form of *doxa*. Because these assumptions are taken for granted as naturally true any attempt to call them into question risks the person doing so to mis-perform and to be seen by others (and probably themselves) as incompetent and wrong. I am arguing that the community of HR and organisational development practitioners in the UK represent a thought collective, much as Fleck (1979) described the scientific community, whose thought style involves assumptions about organisations as systems, individualistic cognitive psychology and strategic choice. These assumptions are maintained by rules and policies to be followed that constrain and enable the ongoing relating of the people who find themselves having to apply them.

In response to the anxiety of being deemed incompetent, through my research I have come to recognise the importance of practical judgement in understanding what to do

in situations where one becomes aware of collusive performances. Towards the end of project three I argued that practical judgement means skillfully responding to the situations one finds oneself in rather than simply following the rules (I go on in project four to explore practical judgement in more depth). To perform in a way that met the expectations of the interview panel meant exercising practical judgement in recognizing the power relating in which I was caught up and yet still trying to stay true to what I believed. As I moved into project four I was coming to see that, even though I may have skillfully exercised practical judgment in the job interview, such skillfulness does not necessarily translate into being able to do the same in less familiar circumstances, such as those I describe in project four. I am in agreement with Stacey (2012, p108) in that it seems to me that practical judgement is highly context related. The context of a job interview is very different to the context of board meetings in my organisation, which was new territory for me at the time of writing project four. Different contexts bring people together with their own unique histories into different situations with diverse patterns of expected performances. As one becomes conversant with any given context, one can become more aware of the patterns of relating that prevail, thus potentially improving one's ability to decide skillfully when to play the game and when to challenge it. However, there is no guarantee of success. Moving on to my narrative in project four I relate a painful example of how my unfamiliarity with the context in which I was working resulted in a shameful experience and my partial exclusion from the group I was working with.

Project Four

In project four I began with a more thorough investigation into what I am calling functional collusion. I argued that the common understanding of collusion is that it is an undesirable facet of people relating to each other and is defined as people deliberately working together to gain an advantage. Collusion is often interpreted in that way by organisational researchers (Tirole, 1986, 1992; Laffont and Martimort, 2000; Kouroche, 2005). As an example, Tirole (1986) is an economist who looks at collusion in organisations by interpreting the relationships between people in hierarchical and bureaucratic organisations through introducing economic modelling. In doing so he assumes that responses between people can be predicted on the basis

that people will behave according to logical rules. This author recognized that relationships may form between people outside of those prescribed by the organisational design in what he calls coalitions. He does this with the purpose of describing how designers of organisations can put in place mechanisms that encourage some coalitions and eliminate others. It seems to me that authors such as Tirole simplify human interaction to make arguments about how best to structure an organisation. They view collusion as people working together with awareness to gain advantage for themselves. They see such collusion as undesirable because it frustrates efforts to predict organisational outcomes. In contrast, I am offering a more complex view of human interaction in which collusion emerges, without planning or discussion, from the history of people relating together in which ‘outcomes’ are understood as themes that shape the power relating in their ongoing, everyday, practice of working in organisations.

A far smaller number of scholars describe aspects of collusion in similar ways to me in that they argue that it involves an absence of reflection and the use of evasive language in local interactions between people (Bullough Jr et al, 2004; Atkinson and McNamara, 2016). The work of Ashforth and Kreiner (2002) helped me to further argue that collusion involves ritualistic performances. Although they don’t directly reference her work, these authors echo the famous work of Menzies-Lyth in describing rituals as defences against anxiety. Ashforth and Kreiner (ibid, pp219-220) use the example of practices in a funeral parlour to describe how ritual enables emotions to be forestalled, redefined or rendered more acceptable. My recent attendance at the funeral of my step-father brought this into sharp definition for me. I noticed how the accentuated rituals of the funeral from the following of the hearse, religious rituals in the church, to the buffet at the wake (and in the case of my step-father’s funeral some very heavy drinking) all served to contain the way people related to each other during the whole day. The rituals gave a predictability to the pattern of what was going to happen in circumstances in which high emotion could lead to relations becoming unbounded. There was clearly a function for all of those present in colluding in the ritualistic processes that were playing out. I describe this as a form of collusion because the way that people participate in the rituals has emerged over time without any planning or discussion that seems to me to be a way of covering over or containing the displays of emotion that might be difficult for others

to bear. I remember clearly my stepfather at the funeral of his mother getting very angry with his cousin. The cousin had chosen to wear a coloured shirt and a tie with piano keys on it rather than the white shirt and black tie worn by everyone else. My stepfather took his cousin's choice of clothes (a clear step outside of the expected ritual) as a sign of disrespect. This seems to me a clear example of how we end up disciplining each other in the maintenance of ritual. Of course, such rituals differ in content depending on context and culture but I would argue that they are likely to be socially maintained in the same way in terms of process. In taking up the idea that collusion can involve an absence of reflection, use of evasive language and ritualistic performances, I went on to say that becoming aware of such collusive behaviours by others and oneself leaves one with choices about how to improvise one's actions to maintain the collusion or to attempt to change it by doing something that is out of step with what others may expect one to do.

In trying to further understand the disciplining social processes involved in collusion I found Bourdieu (2000) helpful in his description of how we embody the *habitus* in the sense that our demeanour, dress, conversation and way of thinking are all imprinted by the habitus in which we find ourselves. He makes an argument for how implicit collusion is the ongoing ratification and rectification of our actions through our relating with others. This description of implicit collusion seems to me to be a good explanation for how the anticipated discomfort of bodily felt processes of relating – interpreted as emotions such as shame – constrain our actions. Our sense of identity is formed through such processes and we are disciplined through this experience, which is paradoxically both individual and social at the same time.

The events I described in the narrative in project four involved a lot of uncomfortable emotions for me. As I described in project three, in contrast to other organisational scholars, such as Derous et al (2016) who seeks to separate emotions from decision making, I had come to see that emotions are inevitably involved in processes of relating at work, and that one cannot choose whether to involve one's emotions in how one decides what to do. Damasio (1994) is helpful in understanding the physicality of how decision-making involves both emotional experience and rational choices. But I would agree with Burkitt (2014, pp78-99) that reason and emotion cannot be separated in the way Damasio claims and that felt experience interpreted as

emotion is context dependent. By this I mean that in different contexts similar bodily experience will represent different emotions. Feelings of shame involve a raised heart rate, bodily shaking and sweating for me, but so does the anticipation of a thrilling fairground ride. Through this emotional experience, as we interact with others over time, we are disciplined into behaving according to the patterns of relating in the habitus that we find ourselves in. To avoid the discomfort of emotions such as shame and guilt we collude with such patterns in the maintenance of the social object. In project three I colluded, more or less, with the interview panel as to the performance they expected of me. I avoided any feelings of shame and successfully got the job I wanted. My proposition in project three that there could be uncomfortable consequences of choosing not to collude, and giving an unexpected performance as described by Goffman (1959), seems to be borne out by my research in project four.

So, in project four I found myself excluded and feeling sorry for myself, having attempted not to collude with the group with which I was working by challenging the familiar patterns of relating. Upon sharing my work to that point with my learning set and supervisors the social nature of my research on the DMan came into sharp focus. My learning set, including my first supervisor, had been suggesting that my project four, having been through a number of iterations was approaching the point where it might be good enough for me to move onto writing my synopsis. The usual expectation then was to share my work with a second supervisor. I understand that one of the intentions behind having a second supervisor not participating in the learning set, and only intermittently reviewing students' work, is to enable them to take a more detached view. Chris, my second supervisor, responded to my work in what felt like quite sharp terms. He argued that I had gone about my attempt not to collude without properly preparing the political ground, and with poor practical judgement, and that it was this that had resulted in my exclusion. Whilst I recognise that he was inviting me to think about the politics of the situation I was describing, it felt like I was being reprimanded by him.

Reflecting on this exchange between Chris and me has deepened my understanding of what Mead (1938, pp42-51) was writing about in his description of emergent social process. Mead argues that the meaning of one's gesture is in the response of the other. By that I take him to mean that one is perpetually making sense of one's own gestures

in relation to another's who are themselves responding to your gesture in an ongoing social process. As each of us emerge as individuals through our different historical experience we may all subtly, or even not so subtly, respond differently to the gestures of others through our differing perspective of a generalized other. I think this is what Burkitt (2004, p118) meant when he said that people may subtly refract and deflect social values. Whilst someone may anticipate a particular response to their gesture, the meaning of it gets shaped by the response of the other in a continuous process of relating.

My second supervisor may well have intended to provoke my reflexive inquiry into how I had participated in my own exclusion in my narrative in project four. However, because of my experience of being shamed and criticised by male authority figures in the habitus of my early years, I am particularly sensitive to the potential for shame and I interpreted his gesture as a rebuke. I remember when I first read his email to me. I was standing in a park in London and as I read his message I could feel my stomach and throat tightening. In that moment I wanted to run away and hide, I wanted to stop doing this doctoral programme. My response was to feel disappointed, hurt and ashamed. In his email Chris anticipated that he was taking a risk and that his response to my work may be disappointing for me. I fought with myself in my response: I wanted to get angry with him, to push him away. However, at the same time, I was able to recognise his reflexive practical judgement in trying to anticipate my response in the forming of his message to me. There was something in the way he expressed it which encouraged me to notice my own reaction. I was feeling disappointed, hurt and ashamed and I did want to run away but I was also able to be curious as to why I felt that way.

My exchange with Chris and my learning set prompted me to return to a further exploration of practical judgement and ethics. In our learning set we had settled into a pattern of relating in which my set and my first supervisor were supportive of me moving on to writing my synopsis. It may also be relevant that my learning set and first supervisor were all women at this point (subsequently another male student joined the group). My historical experience of women authority figures has been almost exclusively supportive and nurturing. So, whilst the responses of my first supervisor to previous iterations on project four may well have been similar in their

content to those of Chris, as a man, the meaning of his gesture to me was experienced as much more of a shock. The incident I described in project two when I became aware of the infantilizing processes I used in my facilitation practice also involved a response to my work from a male second supervisor. I am sensitive to how I might be judged by such men as a result of having stern and critical male parental figures in my early life. In my research, this sensitivity has been emotionally painful whilst also useful in both enabling me to achieve a movement in my thinking as well as a fuller and more reflexive understanding of that movement.

I think what was going on in my learning set was a form of the functional collusion that I have been pointing to in my research in that a familiar pattern of relating was emerging, undiscussed, in how we were working together. I'm not suggesting that anyone was deliberately avoiding shame but that seems to me to be what was happening. There is, however, an important difference between my experience of the learning set and my experience at work. In the learning set, and between first and second supervisors, we were able to have conversations about what had happened that allowed us all to understand more about the collusion that may have been emerging. Having discussed a number of iterations of this synopsis with my first supervisor I can also see that my focus on the responses of my two male supervisors has resulted in the potential for the role of my female first supervisor to seem diminished in my account of what was going on. One can see that this could be an echo of my early habitus in which the role of supportive women in my life fades into the background against stern and disciplining male figures. The realization of this has saddened, and perhaps even shamed, me in that the ongoing support and challenge from my first supervisor has been crucial in completing my thesis.

In project four I took issue with a view of ethics that seeks to separate the present and the future in which one can deliberately create a future through planning and acting in the present. This is a systemic way of thinking about ethics that represents the dominant discourse in organisations, according to Stacey (2007, pp350-352). As an example, from the perspective of management studies, Hian and El'fred (2004) take up the issue of organisational ethics in response to corporate scandals in the USA. These authors typify a stance in which the organisation is reified and actions can be

taken by managers and leaders to fold policies and processes into organisations that can predict the actions and even the values of employees,

As ethical values may vary from one person to another, it may be necessary for leaders in organisations to adopt certain measures to inculcate certain ethical values among employees in order to manage organisational outcomes (ibid, p678).

As I describe at the end of project one, these kinds of assumptions were also made by people working in my organisation, as illustrated in the production of a set of organisational values by a small group of people that are intended to be somehow embedded in the organisation. There seemed to be an assumption that it is desirable and possible to set out the values of the organisation to which people could submit and align themselves, as described by Senge (1990, pp224-225).

Instead, in agreement with Griffin (2002, pp169-170), I would argue for a view of ethics that takes seriously the idea of the living present in which the future is perpetually emerging from the gestures and responses between people in local contexts. In thinking about ethics in this way I think it is important to recognise that future global patterns of relating are dependent on what emerges from many interactions between people locally. We cannot separate the global ends we are seeking from the local means we use to achieve them. In project four I was trying to introduce a local change to patterns of relating by acting differently. However, in my judgement about how to act I wasn't paying attention to the patterns of relating that prevailed in the situation I found myself in.

In retrospect, project four could be described as an exercise in exploring the plausibility of what I had been proposing in previous projects. I had previously argued that people collude with each other to avoid feelings of shame and here I was, in my attempt not to collude, experiencing the shame and exclusion that it seemed to me that others were avoiding. In attempting to get the trustees and directors to explore their own patterns of power relating I became isolated and excluded from the group. I felt ashamed and deemed myself to be incompetent. In sharing my work with my learning set and my supervisors I came to understand that my feelings of incompetence were

not only the result of the disciplining social process in avoidance of change but also my own lack of discernment, or practical judgement, in when I could call what was going on into question and when I couldn't. Since writing project four Barbara has resigned and I have been working with the other directors to make sense of how we will go on together, both in the interim period when we will be without a chief executive, and in the anticipation of a new one. In our meetings together we have been able to talk about our feelings of anger and anxiety about what seems like an increasingly uncertain future. These discussions serve to give us some detachment in our engagement with each other and an opportunity to reflect together about what is going on between us.

As I was writing this synopsis, over twelve months had passed since the events I described in my narrative in project four. The work with my director colleagues and the board of trustees in forming a global partnership has continued. The model that Barbara drew up (described in project four) has become part of new planning and budgeting processes and the board of trustees have agreed to form a working group to look at what governance changes may be necessary in the future. The directors are also forming a transition management team, bringing in some senior managers from our offices in Africa, Asia and Latin America to help think about what changes might be necessary in management processes. I could not have foreseen the emergence of these groups as I was working with directors and trustees over a year ago but it is clear to me that the theme of creating a global partnership in the organisation is increasingly being taken up as part of the discourse as people relate to each other in their local contexts. In response, global patterns of relating are changing. I have brought in this update on what has happened since writing project four because I think it is an example of how patterns of relating change over time as a result of many people interacting with each other. I offer this not as any form of a resolution or final result. Only that patterns of relating are changing and they may or may not continue to change as people work together; there is no beginning and no end.

My Arguments

In this section I have set out three arguments that I have formed during my research. As they have emerged from my reflexive exploration of my experience at work in an International NGO, any generalizability beyond that habitus would need to be proposed with some circumspection.

However, outside of this organisational context I have shared and discussed my research with organisational development practitioners working in other employment sectors (as I describe in the contribution to knowledge section below), and in these conversations some have expressed recognition of my description of working with functional collusion. This could indicate that my research may be generalizable to people working in that broader community. In addition, much as I describe in my contribution section later, my arguments can only be offered with warranted assertability, (Dewey, 1938, p7) given that human knowledge is ever evolving and moving. In the idea of warranted assertability, Dewey argues that considering something to be true can only be enough to enable us to take the next steps. Dewey was more interested in the process of coming to know as a continuous process of inquiry rather than in conclusive knowledge that he saw as an end to inquiry. Within this process what we thought was true may be found to be false,

By ‘knowing’ Dewey means inquiry in a world that is not static. He means inquiry into things ‘lived’ by people. He means experimenting with solving problems such that the action entailed in the solving of problems is inquiry itself and warranted in the assertions made about the solved problem when it is solved (Boyles, 2006, p9).

Argument One: People often collude with each other in the maintenance of the prevailing habitus in avoidance of shame. Anyone attempting to explore the collusive patterns of relating in groups risks triggering this shame and exclusion.

In projects two and three I developed the argument that patterns of relating often emerge undiscussed between people over time and are maintained to give a sense of predictability in their social relationships. This has the function of limiting the

potential for uncomfortable processes such as shame to arise. Central to this argument is the concept of habitus. To be explicit about how I am taking up habitus I will further reflect on the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Norbert Elias.

Bourdieu (1977) argued that an individual is the embodiment of their habitus and in his later work he recognized how he had changed in response to how his own habitus had been ruptured as a consequence of his social ascension through education (Reed-Danahay, 2005). I understand this to mean that one changes in response to experiencing a change to the habitus without being able to lose the effect of one's early experience. I grew up in a working class town and partly experienced that habitus as an expectation that to be a man one had to be tough and strong. The ability to physically dominate others was revered and respected. Although physically bigger and taller than others, I was less imposing than my two brothers, and consequently I thought of myself as lesser than them in the family hierarchy. I was able to do relatively well at school but that was less well respected socially. In contrast there was a belief that the best one could do was to find a job with good prospects and a pension. I took on these beliefs and did find a job with a pension but was never wholly satisfied with it, and although I had wanted to go to university, I didn't feel able to do so. I have lived away from my hometown for a long time and since leaving have lived subsequently in different groups with different outlooks on the world in which the need to be tough was less present and educational ability was valued. During the time I have lived away from where I grew up I have completed a Masters and I am now doing this DMan programme. Now, when I return to visit family I feel ill at ease, as if I don't quite belong. At a recent family funeral my mother told my aunt and uncle that I was doing a doctorate. Their response was to ask what that meant and what it taught me to do. I found that a difficult question to answer in a way that I thought would satisfy them. In the end I said something about how it was good for my career to have a doctorate (although I don't think that is necessarily true). In response they nodded and agreed. As a consequence, I could feel the tension of trying to answer their inquiry ebbing away. I think this is an example of me colluding with the expectations of my family. Their understanding of education is in terms of other family members having become nurses. It seemed to me that their comprehension of the value of me doing a doctorate could only be understood in a very skills-based and instrumental way in which one seeks to better oneself and improve the family's

prospects. As I was at a family funeral I didn't feel that was the time and place to have a long conversation about the value of doing a doctoral programme. I think I was making compromises in the way I communicated because I wanted to be able to give them an answer that suited them and didn't risk embarrassing or patronizing them.

When reflexively responding to my work on the DMan I found the concept of habitus helpful in understanding what was going on. In project one my description of working in the immigration department of the UK government with the top down management of targets represents an example of how cybernetic systems assumptions were taken up and applied by everyone involved; in project two I felt disciplined by Barbara into using the MBTI psychometric tool and found myself engaging in infantilizing facilitation practices that were expected by the directors in the social object of their awayday. In these examples I recognise the physicality of habitus as described by Bourdieu (2000), by which I mean that we are formed by our habitus and it shows up in everything we do and say. Bourdieu's habitus gives us an explanation for why we experience the social as a stable phenomenon as it is reproduced in each of us as we in turn reproduce and maintain and potentially change it in our ongoing interactions. My argument for functional collusion involves the processes of relating that continuously maintain the habitus. This is partly influenced by the avoidance of the anxiety and potential shame that could ensue as a consequence of not knowing what to do and the identity threat that may ensue.

Elias (1998) also takes up the notion of habitus and for him, in common with Bourdieu, individuals are formed through an ongoing social process into which we are born. Elias uses the idea to describe how things change over time as what he calls the civilizing process takes place. Elias makes an important point about how the civilizing process is not the result of any deliberate planning but instead a form of order arises out of the complexity of relating between interdependent people,

It is simple enough: plans and actions, the emotional and rational impulses of individual people, constantly interweave in a friendly or hostile way. *This basic tissue resulting from many single plans and actions of people can give rise to changes and patterns that no individual person has planned or created. From this interdependence of people arises an order sui generis, an order*

more compelling and stronger than the will and reason of the individual people composing it. It is this order of interweaving human impulses and strivings, this social order, which determines the course of historical change; it underlies the civilizing process (Elias, 1998, p50).

For Elias, from these complex interactions between many people both stability and change arise at the same time. Mowles (2015, p103) takes up this idea in thinking about organisational change and argues that the dynamics of continuity and change are ever present in organisations and always have been and that a manager's job is to work as creatively as possible with them. In project three I point to how the rules of HR practice have evolved over time with individualistic and systemic assumptions. I am proposing that such assumptions and rules have emerged without anyone planning them that then form part of the habitus of the UK public and third sector. As I described in project three, as I applied for and was interviewed for a promotion, to appear competent; I felt the need to more or less collude with these assumptions.

So, Bourdieu and Elias contribute to the argument that we are thoroughly social selves, born into the habitus that forms us through emotional and discursive involvement with other people. We then reproduce this habitus as we constrain and enable each other in our ongoing relating. It is an aspect of this reproduction of the habitus in the context of organisational change that I have been describing as functional collusion, a reproduction that goes on in the context of discussions about the practice of organisational development. This is evident in my description in project one of working with the Burke Litwin model (Burke and Litwin, 1992). However, in agreement with Burkitt (2014, p118), I also found that the body does not always reproduce the habitus. Reflective individuals relating with other reflective individuals may subtly refract and reinterpret social values. Such small local changes in how people relate to each other may escalate into larger scale changes to global patterns of relating although such escalation is unpredictable.

Present in the work of both Bourdieu and Elias is the idea of the internalization of social control (Reed-Denahay, 2005, pp60-61). My experience, as described in my research in project two and three, demonstrates how in a number of contexts (like the facilitated team event and a job interview process), I experienced the requirement to

perform in a particular way to be taken seriously. In project two my attempts to explore the patterns of relating that had emerged in a group were met with periods of silence that I experienced and interpreted as the anticipation of shame and anxiety. In project three I described how the processes of relating in the job interview situation have become formalized and ritualized. This formalisation manifested in rules and regulations as to how interviews should be conducted makes the interview process much more predictable and such predictability limits the potential for shame and anxiety.

Anyone not performing as expected in what I have learned to think of as a social object, after Mead, would risk feelings of shame and exclusion. In project four my experience of attempting not to collude with the expected patterns of relating resulted in me feeling incompetent, ashamed and excluded.

Argument Two: Reflexive inquiry offers a way of exploring collusive patterns of relating in groups. In addition, an exploration of emotions is an important part of any reflexive inquiry.

As collusive patterns of relating tend to emerge undiscussed between people, finding ways to uncover and discuss them through inquiring into what we are doing together seems important if we are to find new ways of relating together, or at least become more aware of what we are doing. Such an inquiry would involve us reflecting upon and being reflexive about what we are doing. I will explain what I mean by both reflection and reflexivity.

John Dewey (2012/1910) identified reflection as a form of thinking that was important to learning from experience. He argued that reflection could be prompted by the experience of doubt or puzzlement related to what was being experienced. For Dewey reflection could stimulate purposeful inquiry and problem solving. He further suggested that thinking reflectively held the potential for people to notice and move away from what had become routine or habitual and instead move towards what he called reflective action, which involved critical deliberation on what had been taken for granted in one's experience. So, for Dewey, reflection is rooted in experience and

practice, and he recognizes the potential for discomfort in being reflective but also cautions against unreflective inquiry;

To turn the thing over in mind, to reflect, means to hunt for additional evidence, for new data, that will develop the suggestion, and will either, as we say, bear it out or else make obvious its absurdity and irrelevance...the easiest way is to accept any suggestion that seems plausible and thereby bring to an end the condition of mental uneasiness. Reflective thinking is always more or less troublesome because it involves overcoming the inertia that inclines one to accept suggestions at their face value; it involves willingness to endure a condition of mental unrest and disturbance. Reflective thinking, in short, means judgment suspended during further inquiry; and suspended conclusion, and in mastering the various methods of searching for new materials to corroborate or to refute the first suggestions that occur. To maintain the state of doubt and to carry on systematic and protracted inquiry – these are the essentials of thinking (Dewey, 2012/1910, p13).

More recently Donald Schon, an influential writer on organisations, in his book, *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983) argues for a form of reflective practice in which,

The practitioner allows himself to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation which he finds uncertain or unique. He reflects on the phenomenon before him, and on the prior understandings which have been implicit in his behaviour. He carries out an experiment which serves to generate both a new understanding of the phenomenon and a change in the situation (Schon, 1983, p68).

In this work Schon differentiated between reflection-on-action, which involves reflection on what has occurred after the fact, and reflection-in-action, which involves the practitioner being able to think about what he or she is doing while they are doing it. He argued that reflection-in-action was at the centre of what he described as ‘professional artistry’. Echoes of this reflection-in action can also be seen in Senge’s (1990) description of ‘personal mastery’ in which “people with a high level of

personal mastery live in a continual learning mode” (ibid, p142). In their descriptions of reflection and learning Schon and Senge take the idea of organisations and people as systems for granted. This leads them to individualise and decontextualize what it means to be reflective. Instead I am attempting to stay with the idea of the emergence of identity as a social process in which reflection can only take place in specific contexts in the living present. I would contend that reflection is action and there can be no separation between reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action as suggested by Schon.

Mowles (2015) argues that reflection and reflexivity are different but connected activities. He suggests that reflection occurs as a first order action when one is able to detach oneself from one’s involvement. He goes on to contend that reflexivity is a second order action in which we think about how we are thinking about what we are doing,

In reflecting we will be thinking and feeling deeply about something, possibly our own experience, while in becoming reflexive we are bringing that reflection back to ourselves and may be changed by it (Mowles 2015, p9).

For Mowles then, reflexivity is a process that has the potential for the transformation of the researcher. It is a process through which the researcher recognizes that they are likely to have only a provisional view of what is going on in the situations they are researching due to limitations of their own bias and that in bringing reflection back to themselves they may be transformed. To make the claim that one is describing the world from more than one’s own perspective, one has to get into discussion with others. To work towards objectivity, one has to consider multiple subjectivities. This is less in terms of seeing subjectivity and objectivity as somehow separate and working to balance them (as I described it in project one), rather it is in terms of finding objectivity in the exploration of many subjective viewpoints as an ongoing process. One can pay attention to the biases that are present and taken for granted by the people with which one is interacting, described by Holland (1999) as paradigms or thought styles (after Fleck 1979), that limit awareness and movement of thought. These biases, paradigms or thought styles that show up in the patterns of relating

going on around us affect what people feel that they can and cannot say. They act as enabling constraints and may be different for individuals depending on the unique nature of their formative experience. I agree with sociologist Matthew Adams (2006) who recognizes that reflexivity is important if one is to explore one's habitus.

In project four I experienced what can happen when one acts outside of the expected patterns in that I was shamed and excluded. Later in project four, having been excluded, I had to find a way to continue participating in my ongoing work with colleagues. In doing so I found a way to share how I was feeling with other directors. This then seemed to prompt them to share their own feelings of vulnerability and the way in which we have been able to work with each other since has changed, perhaps partly as a result. In the sharing of my feelings, and encouraging the articulation of different responses from others, there is some evidence that patterns of relating are changing as we work together. I would argue that this is supportive of the idea that our everyday interaction with others creates us, just as we create others.

In the maintenance of how we relate together I have argued that emotions are crucial and therefore recognition of emotions is important in the reflexive inquiry into our social experience. Given my experience that the avoidance of uncomfortable emotions, such as shame, plays an important part in collusive patterns of relating I would argue that emotion is an inevitable part of our experience. Therefore an exploration of our experience of emotions is a vital part of any social inquiry and an important aspect of reflexive practical judgement.

The circumstances I described in project three in which I was able to successfully navigate the interview process and get myself promoted demonstrated how I could exercise practical judgment in giving an acceptable performance as an interviewee (something I have done many times). However, my performance in facilitating the board of trustees in project four demonstrated how my performance, because it differed from what was expected, interrupted the group's ability to maintain the social object of the board meeting with the result of my exclusion and feelings of shame. This demonstrates the importance of context in exercising reflexive practical judgement, which is the ethical and political choice-making we do in the living present as we participate in ongoing social interactions (Mowles, 2015, p169).

Whilst I am arguing that reflexive inquiry may be a way of bringing to our attention the ways in which patterns of collusion are emerging in groups, I don't think there are any guarantees that it will. As I have argued earlier, interactions between people in the living present can be unpredictable. Additionally, as I have found in my research, reflexive inquiry that calls into question our assumptions can challenge our sense of who we are and can lead to the discomfort of emotions such as shame. Attempts at reflexive inquiry in groups can lead to people feeling defensive, just as Neil expressed in project two. My experience of organisational life is that reflexive inquiry is not common, nor is being open to a state of doubt. Should reflexivity become over-used we could find ourselves constantly challenging everything, leading to people feeling inhibited in their participation (Solso, 2016, p176). And so, the appropriate invocation or encouragement of others to engage in reflexive inquiry also requires practical judgement in the contexts in which one finds oneself.

Argument Three: Ethical judgements emerge and are contested in local situations in the living present rather than arising from the application of universal rules.

If we are to attempt to inquire into our functional collusion with others we will inevitably find ourselves navigating ethical dilemmas as to how much to play the game and how much to call it into question. I am arguing that such ethical dilemmas cannot be adequately solved through the application of universal rules.

Throughout my research I have drawn on the theories of George Herbert Mead and Norbert Elias to understand concepts of how, paradoxically, we become individualized through our social experience whilst we contribute to the maintenance of patterns of relating. Stacey and Griffin (2008) take up these authors in describing the theory of complex responsive processes of relating. As I've described in project four, the future is perpetually being constructed in the living present (Griffin, 2002) in which our understanding of the past and our anticipation of the future constrains and enables our moment-to-moment interactions with others. The multiple interactions between people in the living present makes the future unknowable and therefore we cannot guarantee that our actions will be good in advance of carrying them out.

However, one can see attempts being made to predict what good future actions would be in lists of values or desirable behaviours set out in organisational policies and processes.

In project one I described how I struggled with the ethical dilemma of whether to follow the organisational policy on the use of equipment or not. This was problematic because the policy did not seem to offer me any way of acting in a way that seemed ethically appropriate in the situation I was in. This resulted in me experiencing a double bind, an experience that Mowles (2015, p14) argues is common in organisations where people are encouraged to align themselves with organisational values and vision statements and yet at the same time to be themselves and to speak out when they have doubts. Such policies and rules often ignore the fact that life often presents contradictions and double binds. As an example, I would point to my experience of working with competency frameworks that I described in project two when facilitating the directors' away-day. On the one hand we were discussing how we all might appreciate our individual diversity and yet on the other hand we were measuring each other on how well we had demonstrated a narrow set of pre-defined behaviours set out in the competency framework as universally desirable. As a result, managers often find themselves having to navigate such requests for unity and alignment in their everyday experience. In this thesis I have discussed ethics at length and I have argued that there is no system outside of our local relating and as such one can only take up such prescriptions as enabling constraints in how we relate together. These constraints pattern our conversations and, what is ethical, "...depends on who is involved, the context, the history and the relationships of power" (ibid, p16).

As I said in project four thinking about ethics in this way involves practical judgement or *phronesis* which is a way of knowing that is action oriented, context dependent and pragmatic. It was originally differentiated, by Aristotle, from *episteme*, (which is functionalised by *phronesis*) a way of knowing in which truth is an external and universal constant and *techne*, which is a mode of knowledge that comes about through the incremental process of learning such as in developing a craft or art. As such, *techne* is context free and manifests as rules, principles and propositions. Phronetic knowledge cannot be taught through rules or principles because of its context dependence (Stacey, 2012, pp56-57; Hager, 2000; Doddington, 2013). In

framing ethics in this way, I am arguing that it is rooted in our ongoing actions in relationship to others. Gadamer (2004) argues that phronesis is the process through which,

...one distinguishes what should be done from what should not, it is not simply practical shrewdness and general cleverness. The distinction between what should and should not be done includes the distinction between the proper and the improper and thus presupposes a moral attitude, which it continues to develop (ibid, p21).

Ethical judgements in context are key to ongoing choices about whether to collude or not with the patterns of relating, which may include exploring the assumptions about what is proper or improper, that arise in the groups in which we find ourselves.

My Research Ethics

Zygmunt Bauman (1993) suggests that, as a consequence of modernity, consideration of ethics has moved from being the responsibility of individuals to an expectation that organisations can be held ethically accountable to society. He argues that this has resulted in attempts to develop universal ethical codes that seek to foresee and prescribe in rules, policies and procedures what is the right thing to do. Whilst my ethical agreement with the University of Hertfordshire is helpful, in that it clarifies the expectations of the university ethics committee, it has not negated the need for me to pay attention to how I recognise my ethical responsibilities to those who I encounter in my research in the particular situations that arise. I have set out in my thesis and my arguments how I see ethics arising in practical judgements in the living present and I take issue with the view that ethics can be managed entirely through the application of policies and the completion of forms. Mead (1934) describes ethics in social terms,

The sense which the individual self has of his dependence upon the organized society or social community to which he belongs is the basis and origin, in short, of his sense of duty (and in general of his ethical consciousness); and

ethical and unethical behaviour can be defined essentially in social terms: the former as behaviour which is socially beneficial or conducive to the well-being of society, the latter as behaviour which is socially harmful or conducive to the disruption of society (ibid, pp320-321).

Norbert Elias (2000) also sees ethical judgement as emerging from social processes and argues that the judgments of society of what is right and wrong are emerging and shifting over time. It follows then that what may be beneficial or harmful to individuals and society must also be shifting, albeit slowly. Therefore, “the ethics of what one does as a researcher, as with what one does in all other situations, is contingent upon the situation and the emerging and ongoing negotiations with those with which one is negotiating” (Stacey and Griffin, 2005, p26). That’s not to say that there is no right and wrong, rather that the judgements that persist are those that have emerged over time and that are continually being contested as people relate with each other.

To give an example, at a recent residential of the DMan we negotiated which learning sets new students would join. Just before that session I discussed with a member of the faculty how similar processes in recent residential had become more managed by the faculty. I offered the view that as the interactions had become more managed we had lost some opportunities for students to experience and learn from the anxiety that can come from allowing the process to emerge from the activity of students trying to form learning sets without assistance. I was asked and agreed to help facilitate the next set formation session. During the session we formed a circle of chairs as a fishbowl, with a smaller circle of chairs within a larger circle. We asked the new students to sit in the smaller circle of chairs and begin to discuss their experience so far and their preferences for which set they may wish to join. Two chairs were left empty for those who were observing the discussion to join it if they so wished. On discussing this process later one of the new students expressed how they had felt that arranging the conversation in this way had made them feel exposed and singled out as a group. Another student agreed and the focus seemed to shift to me as the one who had decided to arrange the process that way. I felt an increased sense of responsibility and I tried to explain how I thought that it was important that we left enough ambiguity for processes to emerge in the group so that we could learn from them.

This second student expressed how he felt that this wasn't nice. I then asked him what he meant by the word 'nice'. I could sense that we were contesting what it meant to act ethically in the group in terms of what it might mean to be nice. On the one hand it might be nice to offer a process that attempts to contain any possibility of anxiety by simply having faculty decide which groups people were placed in, and on the other hand it might be considered nice to give students the opportunity to express their preferences and influence the decision as well as learn from a more unplanned experience. What I'm trying to point to is that we often become aware of multiple views about what is the right thing to do in a group as we negotiate and contest them, not by adherence to a set of rules that are set for us elsewhere, at another time.

My ethics agreement with the University of Hertfordshire ethics committee, reached through the submission of a completed form EC1 and further clarificatory emails, requires that I maintain the anonymity and respect the confidentiality, of those I write about and that if there was a need to identify any individual, I would document their consent. However, I would argue that it's not only important to respect people's anonymity in my research, but also to properly represent and recognise them. Again, the judgments about how to do that are contingent on the situation. Colleagues with whom I work know that I have been engaged in the DMan programme and that my research has been conducted through reflecting on my work experience. As my research has emerged from my practice it wasn't possible to know in advance which events were relevant. As a consequence, it wasn't possible to get informed consent from the people involved in advance. Where I refer to other people I routinely use pseudonyms. In a conversation with Barbara as I was nearing the end of my research she asked how it was going. I said that it was going well and I explained, as I had done on a number of other occasions, that my experiences at work continued to show up as narratives in my research. She asked me directly if she was included. I said that as my manager she did indeed show up as a character in those narrative as well as other directors and colleagues. In that conversation I got no sense that Barbara was concerned about how she had been represented in my research nor did she ask to read it. I have at other times discussed my research with others at work and shared my emerging ideas. Whilst they have also shown interest, they have not shown any concern. I haven't actively sought to share my research with my colleagues as I have gone along. This is because whilst I recognise that I am writing about my

relationships, which inevitable means that other people appear in my narratives, I have not sought to engage others as active participants as one might if one was conducting research in the form of action research.

Ferdinand et al (2007) looking at ethics from an ethnographical perspective suggest that “researchers are often deliberately vague or choose not to divulge important information about the aims of their research in an attempt to avoid any effect this may have on participants’ behaviour” (ibid, p533). There are times in my research, such as in the conversations I describe above, where I have found myself becoming aware of walking that ethical tightrope as I have responded to questions about my research from Barbara and the other directors. Whilst my ethical contracting with the University of Hertfordshire focused on ensuring the consent of participants, I would argue that it is much more important to recognise that ethical questions arise all of the time in both work and research. In project two I describe how I felt shame about the idea that I had been infantilizing people in my facilitation practice. There were a number of times in my research when I found the patterns of power relating between me and others troubling. In project two, I felt somewhat coerced by Barbara about the use of MBTI instrument and I felt shame at the realization of how infantilizing patterns of relating had emerged between me and the directors. Additionally, in project four I experienced shame and exclusion as a result of my attempt not to collude with the board of trustees. These are examples of how ethics have shown up in my research, just as they inevitably arise in everyday life, and considering ethical choices is integral to making practical judgements. Mowles (2015, p169) argues that attempting to impose abstract standards to cover future ethical dilemmas risks creating totalitarian conditions, by which I take him to mean that people find themselves obeying rules set by others under threat of being penalized if they don’t. Hannah Arendt as a German Jew and political theorist, having survived WWII and the horrors of the holocaust, was particularly interested in totalitarianism. Arendt covered the trial of Eichman as a writer for the New York Times and as a result she wrote her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (Arendt, 1963). Arendt was particularly interested in how Eichmann attempted to explain his actions as having just been obeying orders and the law in doing his job (ibid). Arendt contended that totalitarianism arises when people unthinkingly perform their duties and she goes on to argue that,

... the essence of totalitarian government, and perhaps the nature of every bureaucracy, is to make functionaries and mere cogs in the administrative machinery out of men, and thus to dehumanize them. And one can debate long and profitably on the rule of Nobody, which is what the political form known as bureaucracy truly is....we have become very much accustomed by modern psychology and sociology, not to speak of modern bureaucracy, to explaining away the responsibility of the doer for his deed in terms of this or that kind of determinism (ibid, pp289-290).

This description of bureaucracy and the struggle of deciding what to do in that face of pre-determined rules echoes my description in project one when I was faced with the dilemma of whether to use equipment to help identify dead bodies. I would argue that the future is unknowable and any abstract decontextualized rules can never fully cover all the ethical challenges one will experience. Thinking in this way then leads us to understand practice as the making of practical judgements in how to work with such rules in local contexts rather than simply complying with them. In deciding to disobey the policy I found myself having to make ethical and moral judgments about what to do in the living present, which included my experience of working in that organisation in the past and my anticipation of what might happen in the future. Recently, an Irish colleague was travelling with his Sri Lankan wife to Ireland via a London Airport. Because of changes to UK law, people of Sri Lankan nationality are required to have a visa even to transit the UK. My colleague's wife did not have a visa for the UK and was refused boarding onto the aircraft by the airline and had to find another route to travel to Ireland that did not involve transiting through the UK. However, once in Ireland, because there are no immigration controls between Britain and Ireland, my friend's wife was free to travel back and forth to the UK as much as she wanted to. What I am trying to illustrate with this example is how complicated laws, policies and rules emerge from attempts to predict answers to future situations that can result in unintentional harm to people when they struggle to apply those rules as they seek to exercise discretion and practical judgement.

Method

The methodology I used in my research was partly dictated by the requirements of the DMan programme and partly developed by me to address the specific questions that arose from my experience at work. The DMan programme is founded on the perspective of complex responsive processes of relating (Stacey and Griffin, 2005) and as a participant on the programme one is required to take that perspective seriously.

Another part of the requirements of the DMan programme is the participation in four residential weekends per year. These residential weekends involved working with learning sets and engaging in input sessions from faculty members. They also involved working in groups, drawing on an understanding of group analysis (Foulkes, 1975). In developing the practice of group analysis, Foulkes was influenced by Norbert Elias in understanding the interdependent nature of the individual and the group. Stacey (2003), who was in turn influenced by Foulkes, explains, “The group analytical situation enables observation in a social setting (including self observation)” (ibid, p311). In these group sessions the community is able to explore how patterns of relating emerge over time and in which “students are encouraged to make a contribution to practice from their practice, the crucible of the experiential group offers important material for them to reflect on and make links with their everyday practice and become reflexive about it” (Mowles, 2017, p11). As my research calls for me to pay attention reflexively to how I am forming and being formed by my experience in social settings, developing an understanding of group analysis through these residential weekends has clear relevance. In my thesis I have explicitly written about how my research has been influenced by my work in the learning set including my supervisors, and the wider community of researchers engaged in the DMan programme, including my interactions with my supervisors.

If I take seriously one of the paradoxes at the heart of complex responsive processes theory, that the individual and the social are the singular and plural of one ongoing process (Griffin, 2002), then any method that seeks a separation between my research

and me is clearly unsuitable. This would rule out any form of positivist research approach that seeks to eliminate the researcher's bias from the process. In addition, if I also accept the argument that I cannot fully know the outcome of my actions before I take them, setting out an outcome of my research in advance in the shape of a hypothesis would also seem contradictory. In my research I am not reaching for a form of generalizability that comes from decontextualised replication. Instead I am suggesting that a systematic rigorous argument that elicits resonance from the reader in terms of recognition in their own experience represents generalizability in terms of my research (Mowles, 2015, p13).

As an example, I shared my description of how I came to understand my facilitation practice as infantilizing and the shame that ensued for me in project two with the wider DMan community at one of our residential meetings. In the discussion that followed there was much recognition from the group, especially my description of my experience of being trained in and implementing MBTI sessions. In a more recent residential some newer students have also shown an interest in my description of functional collusion and have expressed how it has helped them reflexively respond to their own experience. This resonance with my work from others is also supported by my locating my experience in academic literature as I turned to Aram (2001) to help me understand shame, to Damasio (1994) and Burkitt (2014) in developing my understanding of emotions, and to Bourdieu (2000) and Elias (2000) in understanding habitus. So, the approach I have taken has been formed through an attempt to demonstrate how my themes and arguments have emerged from a reflexive exploration of my practice in relation to relevant literature.

The consequence of taking this approach is that my thesis hasn't followed the structure commonly found in other PhDs whereby one would set a hypothesis, complete a literature review, identify a gap in knowledge and seek to fill it as a contribution to knowledge. Alvesson & Sandberg (2011) point out that gap-spotting as an approach to forming a research question for qualitative research depends on one taking a position that there is a reality which already exists. Instead they propose problematisation as a way to conduct research that seeks to challenge current assumptions. My thesis has emerged through the process of my research into my experience of working with others at times when I have found myself disturbed,

puzzled or challenged by what is going on around me. I am drawing from a pragmatic philosophical position the idea that we can make, “productive use of doubt by converting it into operations of definite inquiry” (Dewey, 1929, p228). Each project in this thesis started with a dramatic narrative drawn from my experience at work that I then shared with the learning set. In turn they each give a response to my narrative that started the reflexive process of me trying to understand what was going on and how I was thinking. Through a process of further iterations and drawing in relevant literature, I went on exploring the narrative until I had a sufficient explanation of what had occurred to enable me to move on in my research. In consecutive projects I improved my thinking about how I was thinking.

Martella, who also takes up the work of Dewey describes well what I was reaching for,

Thus, in scientific inquiry one starts from a situation in need of explanation: Given one’s current understanding, there is something surprising or disturbing; something one wants to understand better or is unable to accomplish. This starts off an iterative exploration where one examines one’s current conceptions, the experiences one has had, and perhaps gathers some new experiences, in order to find a way to look at the situation that resolves the tensions and shows a way forward (2015, p54).

The structure of my thesis is an attempt to demonstrate my reflexive consideration of problematic situations I have experienced as they have arisen through four projects and culminating in a synopsis which is intended as a further reflexive turn on all four preceding projects, taken as a body of work from which my arguments and my contribution to both practice and knowledge has emerged. The requirements of the DMan programme encourage students not to change the four projects after they have been written. As I said earlier, this is because the four projects, presented in the order they were written, should show one’s movement of thought and growing powers of analysis.

Complex responsive processes of relating as a perspective comes partly from interpretations of the work of writers such as John Dewey (1958) and George Herbert

Mead (1934), who are representative of the pragmatic school of philosophy. The method is to engage with one's experience, which in Dewey's terms (1958) is the object and the experience of the object both at the same time. My research method has much in common with existential hermeneutics where,

...we are irrevocably merged with our world before any conscious reflection, and the polarisation between a thinking subject and an object is a dubious secondary construction...Hence what really matters is to study our place in the world. We are continually and without our consent, thrown, as it were, into an existence in a world where we have to find our way (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000, pp80-81).

Brinkmann (2012, p35) points out that the social world in which we all live always consists of experience, discourse and objects and suggests that we can begin from any one of these three perspectives but we must remember to take all three into account. Whilst I find the separation of experience and discourse problematic, my reading of Brinkman is that he separates them to further our understanding but then emphasises that they are always present. An example from my research would be the conversation with directors in which Barbara drew up the prototype model. The experience was one of anxiety and then diminishing anxiety that I experienced. The social process involved the systemic discourse of the idea that we can use abstract models to plan our activity and the drawing of these models involved the use of objects. Objects such as marker pens and flipchart boards, which are so ubiquitous in my experience of organisational life (and not really anywhere else except perhaps at school), and which serve to mediate so many of my organisational conversations.

My research is taken from my own experience and as such represents a case study that is specific and singular in context. A number of authors have developed interest in the potential of investigating individual case studies (Thomas, 2010; Flyvbjerg, 2001; Mowles, 2015; Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Thomas points to the limitations of this form of research in that case studies can be seen as less valid. He suggests the reason for this is that generalisation is thought of in relation to induction rather than abduction. Thomas (2010) claims that,

It seems to me that any argument about the weakness of case study that rests on its lack of generalisability fails to recognise the limits of induction in social science generally and fails simultaneously to acknowledge the significance of abduction. It fails, in other words, to recognise the offer that can be made in local circumstances by particular kinds of looser generalisation, whatever one calls these (ibid, p577).

In my research my claim to validity for the stances I have taken should be tested by their ability to provide plausible answers to my research questions through the process of abductive rather than inductive reasoning. This is a form of reasoning that we employ in situations where we are uncertain, and that allows us to make sense of our experience. To differentiate abduction from induction and deduction: when using induction as part of one's method, one is able to generalise through observing a number of instances of a given phenomenon and therefore the quantity of cases is important. With regards to deduction, one engages in a process through which one would attempt to falsify general theories by deducing testable hypotheses. These forms of reasoning clearly have a place in scientific inquiry but in terms of my case specific social inquiry it seems to me that abduction is a more appropriate way for me to express my arguments given that abduction is closely linked to and emerged from pragmatist philosophy (Peirce, 1903). Brinkman (2012) given this explanation for the process of abductive reasoning,

Abduction is a form of reasoning that we employ in situations of uncertainty; when we need an understanding or explanation of some effect. It can be formalised as follows; (1) we observe X, (2) X is unexpected and breaks with our normal understanding, (3) but if Y is the case, then X makes sense, (4) therefore we are allowed to claim Y, at least provisionally (ibid, p46).

To take an example from my research, in project two I observed that there were pauses in conversation when I asked questions of the directors that were intended to inquire into how we were relating with each other. In exploring literature on, and my experience of, shame as a response to not knowing I conjectured that these pauses were in response to the felt potential for shame to arise in the group.

In taking a first-person perspective with an abductive method it is arguable that a lack of generalisability is a limitation of my research in that it is risky to generalise too far from the local interactions that I have described. As a consequence, my claims as to the generalisability of this work are limited to the community of organisational development practitioners working in UK non governmental organisations.

This pragmatic approach to research is also in contrast to constructivist methods that would argue that reality is entirely socially constructed. Martela (2015) is helpful in his description of pragmatism as an alternative to positivist/constructivist approach to inquiry,

Instead of a choice between starting either from the ‘real world’ or from ‘discourses’, pragmatism sees that inquiry starts from, and is always embedded within, our ongoing daily experience. Scientific inquiry, as well as any other inquiry, should accordingly start from the problematic situations we face in our lives, and this already gives it an inescapably normative character: scientific contributions are ultimately judged by their capacity to settle the problems we face as human beings, their capacity to widen our understanding of what is possible, and their capacity to guide us towards our aspirations (ibid, p558).

It is my assumption that rather than practice and theory being separate, they are entangled. This means that my practice and my theorising are emerging together as I progress. For example, during project two, whilst reflecting on my experience of facilitating a team away-day, I unexpectedly came upon the importance of shame in learning experiences which then led me to theorize that in avoiding shame we may collude together to avoid significant learning and to maintain current patterns of relating. This then caused me to think about the implications for my facilitation practice, to think of my practice as a form of temporary leadership. Also, in project four, when I responded to the critique from my second supervisor I was able to take that project into a deeper exploration of practical judgement. His response also brought to my awareness, and that of my learning set, as to how we might have been colluding with each other in avoidance of having difficult conversations. This then provided further evidence for my argument that groups collude with each other to

avoid shame.

Torbert (1991) suggests that we need to look at our everyday experience and describes it as primary data. Brinkman (2012, p17) defines everyday life as what mediates the researchers' activities and experiences where everyday objects are those that the researcher appropriates and uses, and situations and events are those that the researcher experiences such as conversations, parties, work and rituals. In my research, because I am interested in understanding my practice, the practice of others and the relationship between the two, I have attempted to explore these everyday experiences we may all take for granted as being part of organisational life, such as team building events, job interviews, and board meetings. Rather than seeing these events as simplified interactions that happen according to the rules that have been set out for them in advance, an approach that Stacey (2007) would describe as being rooted in a formative causality, I have sought to reflect the complexity of what it means to participate with others. To that end I have adopted a reflexive, narrative methodology in which I have used narrative descriptions of my everyday experience of working in organisations. Using these narratives I explore the interaction between myself and others, including the abstract and propositional frameworks that are used to shape that interaction.

Narrative Inquiry

The use of narrative as raw material for analysis from which themes and patterns emerge is a well-established research method (Czarniawska, 2004; Stacey and Griffin, 2005, pp9-10; Andrews et al, 2013; Bruner ,1991). Stacey (2003) describes how human experience is formed by the sharing of stories in order for people to account for and to make sense of what they are doing,

My proposition then is that all human relationships, including the communicative action of a body with itself, that is mind, and the communicative actions between bodies, that is the social, are story lines and propositions constructed by those relationships at the same time as those story lines and propositions construct the relationships. They are all complex

responsive processes of relating that can be thought of as themes and variations that recursively form themselves in bodily interaction (ibid, p78).

By taking a narrative approach to my research I am trying to explore my own experience reflexively to understand how I am being formed by my communicative interaction with myself, which is my mind (this means that I am taking a particularly social view of how I understand the development of self-awareness for an individual) and my communicative interaction with others, which is my social experience and how those interactions form patterns of relating. An example of this is how I describe in project one that I took up ideas of management from my experience of being managed and how, in completing a Master's programme, I came to see myself as a developer of people and organisations and came to think of myself and others as systems in which I could intervene. The evidence I have used is the narratives I have drawn from my experience at work.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) take up the work of Clifford Geertz (1988) and Mary Catherine Bateson (1994) in considering anthropological inquiry when using narrative. From Bateson they argue that it is human to think in metaphors and to learn through stories and that ambiguity is in the nature of living life and not to be eliminated from inquiry. And in Geertz they find support for their suggestion that human stories are written from an 'I' perspective that emerges from relationships with others (as cited by Clandinin and Connelly 2000, p9). This sets out well what I have been doing in my research in exploring my relationships through writing and inquiring into narratives of my experience at work. In the flow of the thesis I have tried to show some of the messiness and the ambiguity that I have encountered as my research has progressed. This is exemplified by the way my research turned on responses of my second supervisors and interactions with my learning set in projects two and four and how I struggled to maintain a reflexive stance in the midst of my emotions.

The narratives that form the data or raw material for my research are drawn from social situations at work in which I am a participant. My research has some of the characteristics one would expect in autoethnography, in that I am attempting to make some generalisations about people and organisations. Much as I have done, auto-

ethnographers approach research through writing narratives drawn from their experience of participating in a particular culture or habitus. In using such particular and local experience there are clearly issues of generalisability. This is taken up through an argument of generalisability being achieved through the evocation of resonance from the reader of such research (Anderson, 2006). In my research this resonance is tested regularly through the responses in my learning set and from sharing my emerging work with other organisational practitioners.

However, the social process characteristics of the method I have taken up moves me away somewhat from autoethnography in that autoethnographers will often work alone (or at least give that impression in their writing), whereas in writing my research I make it explicit how others are responding to it (such as those in my learning set and the wider DMan community) as an important part of the method. This gives my work some of the flavour of what Lapadat (2017) describes as collaborative autoethnography in that I have been explicitly working in collaboration with other researchers. However, there are differences. Lapadat describes a process in which researchers share stories and pool data whereas in my research it is only narratives drawn from my experience that I use as data and it is in my narratives of my own experience that the other researchers show up.

Ralph Stacey and Doug Griffin explain that “Taking one’s experience seriously, through articulating the narrative themes organizing the experience of being together, is an essentially reflexive activity and in its fullest sense this is a simultaneously individual and social experience” (Stacey and Griffin, 2005, p23). I want to go on the explain further what I mean by reflexivity in terms of method.

Reflexivity

What does it mean then to be reflexive? Holland (1999, p167) suggests that “an important function of reflexive analysis is to expose the underlying assumptions on which arguments and stances are built.” In taking a reflexive stance I recognize the impossibility of being in any way outside of my own experience. In being reflexive I

am seeking to not only notice and think about what is going on in my interactions with others, but also to think about the way I am thinking (Stacey, 2015, p112).

I am being reflexive in my pursuit of understanding my actions and the responses and actions of others, including the stances and arguments that I, and others, use. I have sought to further my reflexivity through analysis of my own analysis as my research progressed through projects one to four and the final synopsis. Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009, pp271-280) suggest that wide reading is helpful in developing reflexivity and in responding to my narratives I have sought to explore a breadth of relevant literature across several disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, neuroscience, philosophy and organisational studies in pursuit of understanding of what is going on. Conversations with my learning set, my supervisors and the wider DMan community, in which I explore my work and my narratives, also served to deepen my reflexive thinking. It is in these conversations, where my narratives and explanations of my work encouraged critical responses from others that I have been enabled to work towards as rigorous an argument as possible.

Contribution to Knowledge

My theory about collusion offers a departure from common ways of thinking about why people choose to do what they do in social situations. People often try to understand the decisions people make through an exploration of particular moments of individual choice as exemplified by the famous experiments of Solomon Asch (1956). With regard to OD practice, authors such as Hannafin and Tolbert (2006) take up ideas of individual choice and offer techniques on how to exercise it to make change happen. In an attempt to further inquire into what I mean by collusion I will critically explore these author's work and go on to discuss collusion in terms of what it means to be an organisational development practitioner.

Solomon Asch conducted experiments with subjects drawn from white male university students. In these experiments subjects were placed in a situation where they were in a minority of one in responding to questions. They were asked to match the length of a given line—the standard—with one of three other lines. One of the

three comparison lines was equal to the standard; the other two lengths differed from the standard (and from each other) by considerable amounts. All but one of the group were in on the experiment and were told to respond on certain trials with wrong and unanimous answers. Into this group was placed an individual who was not aware that the group had been primed to answer a certain way. This person heard the majority respond unanimously with answers that clearly contradicted his own assessment, and that differed from the true length of the lines by amounts ranging from $\frac{3}{4}$ to $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches. In these experiments the single individual was placed in the position of a minority of one against a wrong and unanimous majority. A significant proportion of the subjects placed in the minority of one position gave incorrect answers that were shared by the others in the group who were in on the experiment. In the experiments Asch used control groups and looked for statistical differences in how people responded. There was a focus on answers given by individuals in groups at the specific time of the experiment and in interviews later, subjects were asked to give an account as to why they responded as they did.

Of those that answered incorrectly, but in line with the group, they explained their actions in the following statements; “I felt the need to conform”, “It was more pleasant to agree than to disagree”, “I agreed less because they were right than because I wanted to agree with them”, “It takes a lot of nerve to go in opposition to them”, and “It is hard to be in the minority”. Of those that answered correctly but out of line with the group they explained their actions thus; “if I were to be honest I'd have to say what I saw”, and “I was supposed to give the right answer” (Asch, 1956, p32). It seems to me then that there were at least two forms of collusion going on here. The majority of the subjects (those who were in on the experiment) had discussed their actions and were knowingly agreeing with each other to give wrong answers rather than the collusion that I have been describing (which arises without prior discussion). As I discussed in project four, I would argue that this form of collusion is the common way of thinking about it that shows up in most organisational literature on the subject (Marx, 2017; Harrington, 2016, Roux and Thoni, 2015; Porter, 2005). The second form of collusion is more in line with that which I am pointing to in my research. Individuals, on finding themselves in a minority in groups, in terms of what they see as true, find themselves going along with the majority. In everyday organisational terms this form of collusion emerges undiscussed, over time

and involves the whole group. I am arguing that such collusion serves the function of maintaining ongoing patterns of relating, existing power relations and the avoidance of uncomfortable emotions.

In structuring experiments to observe individual responses to the actions of others in groups and generalising through statistical analysis of those responses, Asch (1956) takes the perspective of seeing groups as being made up of interacting but independent individuals. In contrast I am arguing for staying with the paradox of the individual and the social forming and being formed by each other that allows me to write about individuals and social patterns of relating. This relating takes place in the living present in which our identity emerges from our experience of the past and our anticipation of the future. In these terms the individual and the social are indivisible and the history of people's relationships is key to understanding what is going on. In my view, Asch's experiments, which focus on only a specific individual judgement at a specific time, lose the complexity of the narrative histories and future desires of the people involved and how such histories and desires shape ongoing interaction. With that in mind, I find it interesting that the unwitting participants in Asch's experiments were recruited by peers who were known to them, and had already participated in previous experiments (ibid, p4). It seems to me that the nature of their relationships prior to taking part in the experiments would have had a significant bearing on what happened and yet it is barely discussed in Asch's writing. It is the importance of history in the emergence of collusive patterns of relating that I am pointing to strongly in my research.

My induction to the community of practice as an organisational development practitioner on completion of a Masters degree involved me taking up the humanistic and systemic perspectives of that community, which I would argue represents an example of a clear thought collective with a particular thought style. This thought collective and thought style has emerged unplanned over time since WWII, much as I described in project one. I will say more about this history of OD a little later in this section. However, first I want to set out an example of how researchers working in the OD tradition write about social phenomena.

Rainey-Tolbert and Hanafin (2006, pp69-82) describe something they call the perceived weirdness index (PWI). They recognise a phenomenon in which people conform with expected behaviours in groups and they describe an index in which one can be absorbed into the group, or one can be rejected, or one can occupy what they describe as the 'PWI sweet spot'. On the face of it they seem to be describing something similar to how I have experienced what I am calling functional collusion. However, they separate the individual and the social and consider the social to be a system into which individuals can be absorbed or from which they can be rejected. They also go on to assume the individual practitioner is an autonomous individual who can, through developing something they call 'presence', choose how weird they want to be in any given situation. If one is not weird enough one risks being absorbed. If one is too weird one risks being rejected. By doing this the authors seem to suggest that to be weird, or in my words not to collude, is some form of decontextualized strategic choice in that choosing to be weird is done with a foreknowledge of how others will respond to what might be a variety of actions and choosing which action is most appropriate.

I argue strongly against that proposition. If one holds that the individual and the social are indivisible, and there is nothing beyond local relating, there is no autonomous individual self that can choose in the way they describe. Equally, there is no system into which one can be absorbed or from which one can be rejected. Instead I argue for wider patterns of power relating, understood as *habitus*, that emerge from people interacting with each other in which one finds one's identity changing and being maintained in a paradoxical stable instability (Stacey, 2012, pp99-100). In such power relating one can find oneself being included or excluded as people struggle to maintain existing patterns of power relating (ibid, p29). I have found that people working in organisational development take for granted the idea of decontextualized strategic choice as if it was some kind of personal skill. As an example, in a recent conversation, a friend who also works as an organisational development practitioner, recounted some work he had been doing with a group of managers. He explained that the group had asked him to challenge them and so he took up that invitation and worked with them to try to uncover the patterns of relating that were present in this group and went undiscussed (I would argue that he tried not to collude with them). His account of what happened was that the group had become fractious and had

resisted his invitation to reflexively explore what was going on between them. He later found that the group had decided to discontinue the work they had been doing with him. I got a strong sense that my friend felt that he had misjudged the situation, as if he had somehow failed in his practice. Whilst I recognise this example is from someone else's experience, the description of my friend feeling that he, individually, had somehow failed suggests that this could be an example of how someone can individualise and take to themselves notions of incompetence that can arise in a group. It seemed to me from how he was expressing himself that he was taking on, as the facilitator, the entire responsibility for what had happened. When we take up ideas of practice that separate the individual and the social and individualise skills and competencies in the way that Rainey-Tolbert and Hanafin (2006) do, if it goes wrong it can only be the result of the practice of the facilitator having not been good enough, as I described in project two. From the perspective of these authors the individual facilitator was either 'too weird' or had not developed sufficient 'presence'. I am not arguing that the facilitator has no responsibility for what happens when working with such groups, instead I am suggesting that they are a participant in the unpredictably emerging patterns of relating in which one can find oneself included or excluded.

In describing 'presence' Rainey-Tolbert and Hanafin (2006) argue that,

Presence is use of self with intent. It requires the practitioner to be constantly aware of self and others, and to selectively use that awareness to advance the work with the client. Over time, intent becomes second nature. By noticing internal experience and paying attention to the reaction and response of others, the practitioner is on the path to expanded presence (ibid, p72).

They further describe 'presence' in terms of time in that they suggest that past presence comes from one's history and experience. They give the example of Nelson Mandela in suggesting his history of perseverance in the face of insurmountable odds affords him high regard from others in general. They describe 'present power' as how a practitioner looks, what they wear and how they talk as having influence in the present. They argue that one should "become self-aware and interested in the impact one has on others" (ibid, pp73-74). In terms of 'future presence' the authors suggest

that this is something of a lingering impression that the practitioner leaves with the client resulting in future engagements.

It seems to me that Rainey-Tolbert and Hanafin echo how I have described symbolic power (after Bourdieu, 1991), reflexivity and relationships with others in their description of 'presence' but I find their description problematic. Because they collapse the paradox of how people are forming and being formed by each other, they position presence as being a skill that resides within an individual that can then be exercised in any context, something I have come to argue against in my research in that I have found context to be an important part of exercising practical judgement.

Another example of authors writing about 'presence' from an organisational development perspective is Senge et al (2005). They take up the idea of presence and give it something of a spiritual turn and argue that "some theorists had even developed ways of thinking about this (*presence*) that transcended the dichotomy between individual and collective" (ibid, p14). These authors argue that organisations are living institutions and as such are self-organising systems. According to these authors, in these systems we are to see ourselves as both parts and wholes at the same time. What seems to me to be going on here is that while these authors may be perceiving the individual/social paradox that I have been discussing in this thesis, at the same time they see the individual and the collective as separate phenomenon, rather than as being paradoxically related as I have argued. They assume a Kantian form of dialectic in which the paradox is collapsed into a both/and proposition that, as I described in project four, is common in theories of organisational change (Griffin, 2002, pp5-6).

As I said in project one, I have identified myself as an organisational development practitioner since completing a Masters programme in 2009. Prior to my work on the DMan programme this meant that I also took up the systemic, individualistic and humanistic assumptions that are common in the literature on OD. I am arguing that I have been more or less unwittingly colluding, or one might even say I was disciplined into colluding (after Foucault, 1977) with such assumptions, and in the later stages on the DMan also colluding with them, at times, with some awareness.

As I have described in this thesis, thought collectives, which maintain ideas and assumptions, emerge unbidden from many people relating to each other. I think this is key to understanding how one can end up feeling the need to collude with them to feel competent as a member of such a thought collective. In project one I explored how organisational development as a practice had emerged from three major innovations; T-groups or sensitivity training, thinking of organisations in terms of sociotechnical systems, and the development of Likert scales in implementing organisational survey feedback. Having experienced WWII, the people who developed these ideas, were interested in developing democratic and humanistic practice. Others, following in that tradition, writing from an organisational development perspective, have taken up these ideas as principles or values in which practice is now rooted. People working in the field of organisational development are encouraged to see organisations as whole systems and the role of the practitioner is to develop and maintain the health of individuals and organisations. Taking a systemic, democratic and humanistic approach to organisational development assumes that one can stand outside (or inside) of an organisational system and act upon it with control over the people involved and the outcomes of their actions. Organisational development practice has until recently been characterised in a diagnostic form in which the practitioner diagnoses problems in an organisational system and sets out a process for solving them, thereby bringing the organisation to a healthy state (Cheung-Judge and Holbeche, 2011). Diagnosis is seen by some as a very important part of OD practice,

Diagnosis is a highly desirable, if not essential, precursor for informed and effective organisation development...interventions (McCulloch & Cronshaw, 2008, p89).

The assumptions that support this diagnostic way of thinking are not only that an organisation is a system but also that one can act upon that system with predictable results. In the past colluding with these assumptions, has allowed me a sense of belonging to the OD community of practice. However, I now find myself reluctant to describe my work in diagnostic terms. It feels unethical to me to do so given that I don't subscribe to that inherent idea of predictability.

More recently there has been a shift from diagnostic organisational development to what is termed as dialogic organisational development (Bushe and Marshak, 2015). The dialogic form is suggested as a move to recognise organisations,

...not just as open systems interacting with an environment, but as dialogic systems in which people are continuously sense-making and meaning making, individually and in groups. What happens in organisations is influenced more by how people interact and make meaning than how presumably objective external factors and forces impact the system (ibid, p2).

I find the dialogic perspective on OD more helpful to me in understanding how my practice has been changing in that I now find myself trying to get involved in conversations that invite individuals and groups to inquire into how we are making sense of our experience at work. According to Bushe and Marshak (2015), dialogic OD recognises the importance of narrative and the practitioner as a participant in what is going on. However, even when taking up the idea of participation these authors retain a systemic viewpoint on organisations. In contrast to this I am arguing that there is nothing outside of ongoing relating between interdependent people and from this perspective there is no system outside of local interaction. Consequently, rather than viewing organisations as systems, I view such thinking as taking up imaginative constructs that serve to constrain and enable ongoing conversations. Recognising, and where possible exploring, such imaginative constructs in conversation with others is increasingly how I see my practice.

Given that to some extent I thought of myself as an OD practitioner looking to support people and organisations I started out on the DMan programme assuming that I wanted to understand organisational change better or perhaps even how to make change happen. However, what I became increasingly interested in was why things stayed the same. Why was it that, given the many possibilities, patterns of relating were so often familiar? As I progressed through the different projects that form this thesis I increasingly recognised a phenomenon that I have called functional collusion. I have come to understand that it happens when people interact together without former discussion and often without awareness to maintain familiar patterns of relating in avoidance of uncomfortable emotions such as shame or to cover over

conflicting power relations. In this thesis I have argued that it is both an individual and social process at the same time. I would argue that holding of the individual and social in mind at the same time, seeing them as being in an inextricable dialectical and paradoxical relationship with each other, is one of the things that sets my work apart from many other authors writing about organisational development.

As I have described in this thesis, in the dominant literature on organisational development, it is common for authors to emphasise processes that seek to predict how change comes about, often offering models, tools and techniques to make it happen. These authors take for granted that such an endeavour is possible. A feature of conventional theories on change has been to reify organisations and to think of them in terms of systems with an emphasis on making changes to improve alignment between an organisation's various parts. This leads to a discourse of exploring organisational change at some kind of macro level, which can only ever be a conceptual idea, rather than exploring the interactions between people that give rise to stability and change over time. I have argued that understanding the history of local processes of relating between people is vital to exploring the emergence and maintenance of the status quo and such literature tends to leave history relatively unexplored. In contrast, I am proposing a perspective on organisational stability and change that recognizes the paradoxical processes of the individual and the social forming and being formed by each other over time through which ongoing patterns of relating may be maintained or changed in what Tsoukas and Chia (2002) describe as the continuous "reweaving of actors' webs of beliefs and habits of action as a result of new experiences obtained through interactions" (ibid, p570).

My research contributes to knowledge by giving an explication of what is emerging in organisational processes as part of everyday experience in which people collude with each other. I argue that people often do so without discussion and often without awareness in maintaining familiar patterns of interaction, and from which change emerges in the paradoxical stable instability of complex responsive processes of relating rather than as a result of planned interventions using tools and techniques. The lack of discussion is key to the emergence of such collusion given that a discussion of any collusion would disable the ability for it to continue without it becoming a conspiracy. Whilst we don't talk about it, we can collude with each other

as if it isn't happening. Thinking in those terms raises ethical questions about exercising practical judgement when becoming aware of such collusion, and whether or not to bring it into our conversation to make it explicit in an attempt to challenge manipulation.

Taking up contextual reflexivity as practice offers a potentially new way of seeing one's work as an organisational development practitioner. Thinking of OD practice in this way offers a move from thinking of oneself as an instrument (Cheung-Judge, 2001; Seashore et al, 2004) to be applied to organisational systems, to thinking of oneself as a reflexive participant offering temporary leadership (Mowles, 2009, p291), encouraging alternative understanding about what is going on in the ongoing and emerging patterns of relating in organisational contexts.

Using a method with narrative at its heart has given insight into my experience of everyday life in organisations. Such insight into seemingly ordinary shared experiences such as job interviews, team awaydays and board meetings can seem commonplace and therefore trivial but when looked at closely involve collusive processes that are generalisable. I have used the word collusion because in organisational literature it is mostly taken up as a negative aspect of people deliberately planning to gain an advantage (as discussed earlier in this synopsis and in projects three and four) and yet I have found it a good theme that has prompted my thinking. Rather than collusion being entirely negative I am pointing to it as an emergent process of relating that has a clear function of supporting people in being able to make assumptions about how they can go on together in groups.

By inquiring into the specific interactions between people in particular contexts, I have provided an explanation for how it is that patterns of relating are maintained and an explanation for how change emerges in the face of the many complex possibilities that exist. Bourdieu (1977) puts forward the idea of *doxa* to explain how some things are taken for granted and for which there is no contradictory argument. He suggests that only when an unorthodox argument is made can *doxa* come to be understood to be orthodox. My argument is that organisational change theories and systemic thinking, rather than offering ways of predicting future outcomes, are instead themes that shape the power relating in the everyday practice of people working in

organisations. This thesis is intended as a contribution to unorthodox propositions that challenge the *doxa* of the dominant discourse on organisational development. I offer this contribution with the view that human knowledge is ever evolving and moving and my contribution, in common with my arguments, can really only be offered with a warranted assertability (Dewey, 1938, p7) as I discussed earlier.

In project one I set out how I became a practitioner of organisational development and in doing so I took up humanistic and systemic assumptions. In project one and three I discuss how I used the Burke-Litwin model to win favour with a powerful group who also held those assumptions. I argued that practitioners of organisational development represent a thought collective with a particular thought style (after Fleck, 1979) through which those assumptions are sustained. It is to this thought collective of practitioners that I offer my contribution to knowledge.

Whilst I've been working on the DMan programme I have had two opportunities to share my emerging arguments with two different sets of students doing a Master's programme in organisational development. In conversation with the first of these groups I explained what I had started to describe as functional collusion (this discussion would have been around the time I was writing project three) and I invited them to consider what might be necessary for them to collude with in the maintenance of the social object of their Masters programme. At that point the facilitator of the group, who had been the person to invite me to speak to his students, jokingly said that I hadn't told him that I was going to ask that question. His comment was quickly followed by one of the students expressing relief that the director of the Masters programme wasn't there to hear their conversation. There followed a period of what I experienced as nervous laughter. I relate this short narrative because for me it has strong echoes of the events I described in the narrative in project two when I facilitated the group of directors. In that experience on entering the room with a circle of chairs there was similar nervous laughter and joking comments. My interpretation of this is that in both instances the groups were anticipating a discussion that would involve a reflexive inquiry into the nature of how they were relating together and the potential for novelty that may have arisen in such an inquiry. This anticipation of novelty also raises the possibility for significant learning and the potential for shame or conflict to arise. My experience was that both groups were unconsciously working

together to maintain the familiarity of the patterns of relating they had become used to.

In working with the second group of Masters students, having described my understanding of functional collusion from project four, we discussed examples from their own work experience. This conversation elicited, unprompted by me, a discussion of how people, in their experience of their organisations, unthinkingly and without discussion take up individualizing competency frameworks and psychometric instruments in seeking to align individual employees with organisational values. These examples indicate to me the potential for generalizing my research to a wider community of organisational development practitioners.

Contribution to Practice

There have been significant changes in my practice since I embarked on the DMan programme. Since completing project two, which changed the way I was thinking about my facilitation practice, I have become reluctant to use any psychometric instruments such as MBTI. I worry about the ethics of using such instruments in my practice in the way that I was trained to use them which denies anyone the opportunity to critically discuss and deconstruct them. However, I do occasionally use the language of some of those instruments to try to be understood in groups. As an example, in a recent meeting with my colleague directors we were discussing how to adapt the change programme that I have been leading. I noticed how some of the directors wanted to start by thinking about the people involved and others wanted to start with what the structure of the change team and the change process would be. This seemed to me to reflect some important differences in how we worked individually and as a group. I reflected on how some of those differences are discussed in MBTI language in an attempt to invite my colleagues to reflect on how our differences were affecting how we were relating as a group. I think this is an example of how I now find a way to compromise with the dominant ways of thinking in this group to be heard and understood. I want to be clear that when I'm using such language in examples like this I'm not simply making strategic choices about what to say as if I know the impact I'm going to have as a consequence. Rather, it seems to be

a process in which I am making practical judgments about how I speak into the group with whatever seems appropriate to me at the time and paying attention to the ongoing processes of gesture and response that ensue. This includes noticing how I am responding reflexively to others and my own private conversations with myself.

In the past, I might have set up special away-days or meetings and sought to facilitate them with tight agendas and planned outcomes and there are still many meetings in which I participate that match that description. However, in circumstances where I think I may be able to help I now seek to include myself in the ongoing conversations that people are having. I find myself offering my thoughts and insights when they occur and consequently I seem to be invited to support others in their conversations about how they are organizing themselves. It seems that a form of practice is emerging that is recognized by others. An example of this is how I have recently become involved in discussions with the Director of Corporate Services, the Head of Organisational Development and The Head of Human Resources as they have been discussing how they are delivering their services for the organisation. As I'm participating in these conversations I find myself acting similarly to how I have described above, that is, not with systemic models that seem to offer prescriptive solutions but with my reflexive thoughts and insights as they come to me about what we are doing together.

As I've described earlier in this synopsis, I find the changes to my practice are often subtle and show up in how I relate to others in particular contexts. Versions of the conversation I described with Michael, about how I might support the development of his team, take place relatively often. How my thinking has changed is more or less demonstrated depending on who I am speaking to. In talking to Michael, I was trying to use everyday language in trying to explain how I saw change in individual and social terms. When I am talking to Alison the Head of OD in my organisation, given that she is in the final stages of the Masters programme that I completed in 2009, I am able to talk much more deeply about how our thinking is similar and different. We exchange articles and other suggestions for reading as we make sense of what is going on in our mutual and separate experiences of work. What I'm trying to convey here is that the contribution to practice from my research is that I find I am increasingly

thinking about how I am thinking and how such reflexive processes seem to be becoming more habitual for me.

As another example of my contribution to practice, after my conversation with Michael about his new team I went on to facilitate a team meeting with him and his three managers, which included Andrew. I facilitated this day with the help of Alison, the Head of OD. In preparing for the day Alison and I discussed how we might form an agenda that would meet the expectations of Michael and his team. We agreed on a short agenda and Alison said she would share it with Michael and although she worried that it wouldn't be detailed enough for him, he readily accepted it. As part of my facilitation Michael and Alison were keen to use a tool called FIRO-B that involves exploring the control, inclusion and affection needs of individuals. Usually, the use of this tool involves participants assessing their individual needs in numerical terms and the adding up of these numbers suggests how they may want others to relate to them. Whilst I have reservations about the individualistic and decontextualized nature of such tools I agreed to use this one because the participants were familiar with it and I thought it may offer a starting point for them talking about how they wanted to relate to each other as a new team. On the day of the meeting I explained the tool, and my reservations about it. In this thesis I've pointed to the significance of history in understanding habitus and so I wanted to move away from numerical measures when using this tool and towards narrative data to support our discussions. I wanted to draw out the histories of relating from the participants. I explained to the group about how I saw experience as being important in understanding ourselves and others and I invited the participants to discuss their needs in terms of narrative examples from their individual and group histories. Over the course of the meeting I found that the tool got mentioned less and less as people got caught up in discussing their individual and shared stories, their aspirations for the future and how they might work together.

I've related this short narrative to try to demonstrate how my practice is changing as I attempt to exercise practical judgement in my work with others as an ongoing emergent process of colluding or not colluding.

The description of functional collusion in this thesis offers a critique to the way others working as Organisational Development Practitioners think about their practice, especially those working in the not-for-profit sector. I think an article could be drawn from it that challenges the ways people tend to think about organisational development and change and could be published in a management/organisational studies publication such as the Journal of Management Studies.

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