

**Rethinking loyalty within relational workplace dynamics from the
perspective of an organisational consultant practising in Israel**

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November 2021

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of
Hertfordshire for the degree of Doctor of Management.

Abstract

This thesis explores the theme of relations of loyalty among members of organisations, in particular during breakdown situations, during which a sense of loyalty is put to the test. The organisational development (OD) consultant's work within the consultees' complex dynamic arena of competing loyalties and the question of his/her own loyalties are also examined in this research.

The mainstream management literature that explores the concept of loyalty tends to address it mainly from two perspectives: as individualistic and as functionalist. The first addresses loyalty as an individual's fixed trait or position and emphasises how individuals experience and express their sense of loyalty. The second perspective views loyalty as an organisational asset that can be moulded to serve the organisational vision and purposes. Both perspectives frame the concept of loyalty as a binary construct – either loyal or disloyal – thus obscuring the complexities of the experience of loyalty. Studies that address issues of consultant-client loyalty relations mainly focus on contractual aspects such as confidentiality and working processes. These research efforts significantly diminish the multifaceted nature of the concept of loyalty within consultancy relationships. In light of the limitations of conventional research, this thesis attempts to address the theme of loyalty from the perspective of the complex responsive processes of human relating. This approach emphasises the exploration of people's day-to-day local interactions within real life organisational situations, and assumes that organisations are an ongoing patterning of relations among interdependent people.

The research questions of this thesis are: *What does loyalty mean to different people in different organisational contexts? How do employees experience loyalty and disloyalty at work? What are the implications for consultancy work?* The research method applied to explore these questions is a reflexive collaborative autoethnography, relying on narrative inquiry. The narratives serve as the 'raw material' to uncover and explore the ways in which people in organisations experience and make sense of their working together. The researcher takes an autoethnographic account to describe and reflexively analyse the particular occurrences within a group in which the relationship between the researcher and

the people being researched forms a significant part of the study. The research is conducted within a community of inquirers, including other doctoral researchers, who are critically engaged in advancing their colleagues' research studies.

The main arguments that emerge from this research are: (a) Loyalty is a socially dynamic process that reflects people's sense of affiliation and expresses an inherent paradox: while the experience of loyalty is formed as a relational process, it is also felt and experienced by individuals; (b) The organisation is an arena of dynamic competing loyalties which echoes ongoing power struggles among members of the organisation which manifested in alliances and rivalries; (c) Loyalty to a group or a sub-group fosters a strong sense of cohesiveness which tends to create a unanimous way of thinking, yet weakens the freedom to express opposing or critical views; (d) The consultant can offer the client(s) a shared reflexive exploration, which would help in unveiling the emergent loyalty relationships. Moreover, the consultant may draw the client's awareness to the multiple perspectives and views that evolve within the group's interaction and encourage to keep the thinking plural; (e) The consultant, who plays an active role within the client's interplay of conflicting loyalties, might be caught up in his/her own tendencies to a binary view thus losing their understanding of the complexity of relationships. Thus, the consultant is called upon to explore and interpret his/her own dynamic configurations of loyalty and how they are impacted by and impact consulting processes.

Key authors: N. Elias, D. Griffin, A. Hochschild, J. Kleinig, G.H. Mead, C. Mowles, R.D. Stacey

Key words: loyalty, OD consultancy, inclusion/exclusion, family business, gender

This thesis is dedicated to my grandmother Tova, who raised me with endless love and devotion. She taught me how to learn, and instilled in me the value of giving and caring for others. To my parents, Mina and Shmuel, who loved me unconditionally, educated me to the values of friendship, being sensitive to others and social solidarity. My parents believed in my abilities and gave me the freedom to choose, they planted in me the confidence to follow my ambitions. I remember them and are grateful to them.

Acknowledgements

I owe my sincere thanks to the Doctor of Management research community, colleagues and faculty for many thought-provoking and challenging discussions.

A special thanks to my two supervisors Emma Crewe and Chris Mowles, for their inspiration and dedication, for challenging me and enabling me to expand my observations through various perspectives. They encouraged me, cared for me, and offered reflexive and critical views.

I am grateful to my friends and colleagues, in particular to Ora Agmon, Gideon Kunda, Amia Lieblich, Tali Ramon, Noga Shegev, Efi Heiman, Adi Harel, Rochale Shamir, Zvia Elgali, Simi Talmi, Michal Goldstein and Shosh Camchy. Throughout my learning journey, they took an interest, asked intriguing questions, challenged me, made suggestions and supported me as I tried to further my research.

I give a special thanks to my editor Chava Wilschanski, for her tireless and patient support, for her thought-provoking questions and for providing ideas during the editing of this thesis.

Finally, I express my gratitude to my family, especially to my dearest husband, Yossi, for his unconditional love, active listening, sage advice and for always supporting me in following my dreams. A special word of gratitude to my two daughters who have taught me the meanings of a mother's love: to Roni for listening, for showing interest and for continually examining my research insights in the context of her own professional experiences at work. And to Tamar for her incredible involvement, for reading the research, for challenging me and asking pointed questions, and for suggesting original ideas for the analysis.

To my extended family, thanks for your endless love and support, even when it meant spending time away from you all.

Table of Contents

Introduction	8
Research Frame	8
Occupational context	10
Research theme and Research approach	12
Thesis structure	14
Project 1: Fluctuations in Organisational Identity	16
My Roots	16
Striving for Normalcy	19
Career ‘Baby Steps’	20
Opening Up to the Power of Group Dynamics	23
Acquiring New Lenses for Organisational Analysis	26
A Battle for Life	28
Cracks in Employee-Organisation Loyalty	29
A Cross-Cultural Encounter: a ‘We-They’ Split	32
Exploring New Grounds: an external and unaffiliated position	36
Summary and Identifying Key Themes	37
Project 2: A Woman to Woman Programme – Attachment, Identification and Loyalty	40
Introduction	40
Narrative	40
Initial Thoughts	45
Patterns of Gender in Organisations	48
My role as an organisational consultant	60
Being loyal – to whom and to what?	65
Summary and Further Inquiry Questions	70
Epilogue: Meeting the Company’s Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	71
Project 3: Caught Up in a Power Struggle	73
Introduction	73
Narrative	73
Initial Thoughts	78
Labour Unions in Israel - an Historical Background	80
Taking Sides in a Power Struggle – A Question of Loyalty	85
An Organisation in Transition: Tension between change and maintaining stability	86
‘Us’ versus ‘Them’ as an Expression of Dynamic Power Relations	88
Loyalty, Commitment and Identification	91
Summary and Further Inquiry Questions	95

Project4: Loyalty within a Family Business	99
Introduction	99
Narrative	99
Initial Thoughts	105
Family Businesses	108
Emotions in the Workplace and within Family Owned Businesses	115
The stranger as a threat to identity and loyalty to the group	121
Parallel processes in consulting processes	128
Loyalty Consultant – Consultee(s): Further Dilemmas	130
Summary and Main Arguments	133
Synopsis of Research	138
Introduction	138
Research Theme	138
The DMan Programme: Research theoretical and methodological framework	139
Theoretical framework overview	139
Research methodological framework	144
Research limitations	154
Research ethics	156
Projects Summary and reflexive turns	162
Project 1: Fluctuations in Organisational Identity	162
Project 2: A Woman to Woman Programme	166
Project 3: Caught Up in a Power Struggle	168
Project 4: Loyalty within a Family Business	171
Key Arguments	175
Contributions of this thesis	196
Contribution to Knowledge	197
Contribution to Practice	201
Further research	208
References	211

Introduction

Research Frame

In this thesis I explore the theme of loyalty and disloyalty in the network of relationships at work, which includes the OD consultant. The theme of loyalty is explored in relation to additional sub-themes, such as belonging, gender, power relations, inclusion and exclusion processes, identity formation and emotions, which are all relevant to this research. In inquiring into loyalty, and how it relates to these other social processes, I challenge the mainstream, simplistic view of loyalty as an individual, fixed emotion and will propose that we should view it as a complex, dynamic and relational process.

During my 30-year career as a human resources (HR) manager and OD consultant, mainly in private-sector of global corporations based in Israel, I (and other managers) have been interested in the question of employee loyalty and affiliation with the organisation. The fundamental changes at the workplace in recent decades have intensified my motivation to inquire into the theme of loyalty.

The rapid changes in the workplace that are influenced by technological changes, globalization and keen competition, as well as increased employee turnover and their tendency to change their place of work frequently, have sharpened the question of affiliation and the sense of loyalty among employees and the way their organisations work. Since 2020, the workplace has undergone a fundamental transformation due to the Covid 19 pandemic, which forced the management of companies to reduce their workforce without any prior notice and to adopt a new working configuration, a hybrid model (i.e., working both remotely from home and from organisations' premises). Among other changes, the new working models have impacted the degree of connection among members of the organisation: virtual or in-person interactions within the direct work team increased, whereas interactions with distant networks diminished (Microsoft, 2021). The pandemic exemplifies the ongoing disruptions and uncertainty we are all facing, and puts to the test employee-employer loyalty relationships in a range of amplified ways. As examples, it raises questions about whether organisations have been doing enough to support their

employees and whether employees are more propelled to search for new career opportunities now that new, remote working options are possible.

My research questions are:

What does loyalty mean to different people in different organisational contexts? What happens when people are loyal or disloyal in their interactions? What are the implications for consultancy?

My research into the theme of loyalty is part of my doctoral studies in the Doctor of Management programme (DMan) at the Business School of the University of Hertfordshire, which I have conducted between the years 2018-2021. This is a practice-based research programme, in which researchers are invited to conduct a thorough and critical exploration of issues that relate to their experiences at work, to make new sense of what they are doing, to bring novel insights and to contribute to the development of their practice (Mowles, 2017). The programme is a group-based professional doctorate, based on the ideas of the perspective of complex responsive processes of relating (Stacey and Mowles, 2016, pp. 487-497).

The perspective of complex responsive processes of human relating, as described in projects 2-4 and further elaborated in the synopsis, attempts to explore what people do in organisations when they are working together with the intention of achieving something jointly, and how they make sense of what they are collectively doing (Stacey, Griffin and Shaw, 2000; Stacey and Mowles, 2016). This is a multidisciplinary approach to research, drawing on ideas and insights from the complexity sciences, process sociology (especially influenced by the work of Norbert Elias), pragmatic philosophy (e.g., George H. Mead and John Dewey) and the group analytic tradition (as described by S. H. Foulkes). According to the perspective of complex responsive processes of human relating, organisations are viewed as an ongoing patterning of relations between interdependent people as they emerge predictably and unpredictably in local conversations (e.g., discussions, gesturing, conflicts). Global patterning (as organising themes) and organisational narratives arise out of local human interactions (Mowles, 2011). The perspective of complex responsive processes of relating presents a radical critique of systems theories and the dominant

discourse of organisational development (OD) approaches (e.g., Schein, 1987), which view an organisation as a whole or as a system comprised of interacting sub-systems, striving to gain an equilibrium among its parts in order to be more in alignment with the changing environment.

Joining the DMan programme's community of inquirers has challenged my preconceived ideas on organisations and my practice as an OD consultant, which once drew mainly on systems theories and psychological and humanistic theories. It has made me interested in exploring events in organisational life and, in particular, loyalty relations as experienced by members of the organisation. Becoming acquainted with critical management approaches, which the perspective of complex responsive responses is part of, evoked in me a sense of discomfort, and even resistance to exploring the theme of loyalty within the social context of my upbringing or to see the problematic aspects of loyalty relationships among members of organisations. Conducting my research within the setting of a community of inquirers helped me to uncover my assumptions and biases and further my research from a more detached perspective. I will expand on the perspective of complex responsive processes of relating in the synopsis.

This research's insights are mainly relevant for consultants within the field of OD (perhaps especially in Israel), who practice within the arena of dynamic conflicting loyalties. Yet it might also be of interest for consultants who practice worldwide and for any managers who are facing loyalty conflicts in today's working relationships among the people and groups in the organisations they lead and consult.

Occupational Context

Throughout my career I have consulted to the management teams of organisations during accelerated growth processes. These processes included massive recruitment and onboarding of employees, management development programmes aimed at supporting managers to cope with organisational complexity challenges, assisting leaders in designing and implementing organisational changes (such as, organisational structure and working processes changes, post-merger integrations following an acquisition). I also supported

managers in downsizing processes that included closing down organisational units and dismissing managers and employees. The question of relations of loyalty/disloyalty, that always emerged in those organisational processes, was and still is one of the focal points of my practice and interest, which I will explore in this thesis.

Aiming to assist managers in finding solutions for retaining employees and strengthening their affiliation with the organisation, I initiated diverse educational and development programmes. These programmes, were not only developmental in nature, but were also oriented towards communicating the organisational vision, to presenting the organisational 'wider picture' and to strengthening the sense of belonging to the organisation. The underlying assumption of these programmes was that the stronger the employees' sense of affiliation with the organisational goals, the more loyal they will be. This approach emphasises the individualist view of loyalty, which is assumed to be a worker's decision about whether to remain or to leave, and/or the manager and the HR practitioner's responsibility to engage and attract the employee with the organisational vision.

Having conducted this research, I have become retrospectively aware that my fundamental perspectives on loyalty are related to the social context I grew up in and to the values that I absorbed during my upbringing. Growing up in a region of ongoing war and conflict, and with a sense of a struggle to survive, shaped my vision of the workplace as somewhere that was a meaningful anchor of normality, that enabled development and learning, that offered a sense of (seeming) stability, and that served as a springboard for individuals to further their own career, while fulfilling the goals of other stakeholders (owners, managers and colleagues). Being exposed to the humanistic theories during my academic studies (e.g. Maslow, 1954; Peters and Waterman, 1982; Senge, 1990 and Collins and Porras, 2002; Schein, 2010) reinforced my approach, putting a high value on loyalty within the working place.

In my practice, cracks and puzzlement about these perspectives emerged, in particular when I (and colleagues) were forced to dismiss hundreds of employees in a time of crisis. This led me to critically question the theoretical frameworks (e.g., appreciative inquiry approach, Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987) that guided my professional practice, and also

to research the theme of loyalty more extensively. During the DMan programme, I have been encouraged to critically and reflexively inquire into the sense of loyalty of people in an organisation, in their day-to-day practice, and especially in times of conflict and breakdowns. In addition, I have conducted a reflexive inquiry into my own fluctuating perceptions and emotions on the experience of loyalty while being involved as a consultant in various organisational events.

Research Theme and Research Approach

Over the course of my career, I have been exposed to the deep frustration of managers who try to retain and attract their workers but find that nevertheless they leave, despite the fact that the managers have invested resources and time in trying to inspire the staff to feel attachment to common goals and to be flexible about meeting the employees' needs. Concurrently, employees also report their deep frustration with the management of companies. In their view, the companies are motivated mainly by financial considerations (such as transferring operations to developing countries, closing down organisational units and reducing the workforce) rather than staff wellbeing (e.g., work-life balance). The frustration of both managers and employees, along with the frequent organisational changes which have been often forced on the members of the organisations and aroused feelings of uncertainty and lack of job security, have led me to further explore the experience of loyalty.

Despite the fact that managers attach great importance to employee loyalty, the concept remains loosely defined (Hart and Thompson, 2007). It is often described in the management literature either from individualistic perspectives, e.g., how the individual experiences and expresses their loyalty (e.g., Coughlan, 2005; Royce, 1908), or from a functionalist perspective: as if loyalty were an organisational resource (e.g., Reichheld, 2001; Smith and Rupp, 2002; Aityan and Gupta, 2012), in which managers (and human resources practitioners) are expected to intensify the feelings of loyalty among employees, based on the assumption that a loyal employee would remain working in the organisation, be identified with the organisational vision and values and would be willing to contribute to the organisation's success. Loyalty in this sense implies a binary construct: people are either

loyal or disloyal. This viewpoint on loyalty, a perspective that was similar to how I once viewed it before I embarked on this research, began to trouble me as I started narrating organisational episodes in breakdown situations, as part of this research.

The theme of loyalty, which have been studied from diverse theoretical fields (such as psychology, philosophy, ethics, sociology, anthropology, politics and management) is a vast subject related to additional processes and topics such as identification, trust and integrity. In this research, I have chosen to focus mainly on sub-themes (such as, belonging, gender, power relations, inclusion and exclusion processes, identity formation and emotions) that emerged out of the narratives included in this research in order to inquire into the complexity of loyalty from different angles.

Having conducted my research, I have now come to view loyalty as a context dependent relational dynamic process, which evolves and changes when people work together. Yet, paradoxically, while the sense of loyalty emerges in social interactions, we experience loyalty and ascribe different meanings to these experiences as individuals. I will elaborate on the experience of loyalty, as it became apparent in this research, and describe the key arguments in the synopsis.

The research methodology of this thesis, which draws on the perspective of complex responsive processes, is a reflexive collaborative autoethnography, relying on narrative inquiry. Thus, the researcher as an ethnographer describes and reflexively analyses a particular group or organisation, yet the relationship between the researcher and the researched forms a significant part of the study (Lapadat, 2017).

The DMan programme's research approach is highly collaborative, requiring participation in four residential weekends a year, which are conducted through processes based on the group analytic approach (e.g., some of the sessions are unstructured and improvised, highlighting 'the experiential group as a live forum for thinking about group processes in organisations and thus as a method of research', Mowles, 2017, p. 9). Moreover, the narrative inquiry and writing the entire thesis is designed to follow an iterative process (e.g., writing, reflection, discussion, theorising and further writing and reflection), with the help of

the learning set's colleagues (i.e., a sub-group of the wider research community) who critically engaged in commenting on each member of the set work, advise and share ideas how to advance the research. The methodological approach of my thesis is further elaborated in the synopsis.

Thesis Structure

The thesis structure reflects the evolving process of this research over the course of the programme, and consists of the introduction, followed by two sections:

The first section presents the four projects of my research, in the chronological order they were written and analysed. The narratives serve as the raw data in each project followed by reflection and analysis in part based on a review of the literature that relates to the sub-theme of each project. The first project is an intellectual and experiential autobiography, a retrospective account of significant events and the schools of thoughts that have formed my practice. The reflexive analysis of this project has enabled me to uncover some of the assumptions, predispositions and tendencies which have informed my practice. The subsequent three projects begin with detailed accounts of experiences, articulated as narratives, that I have been involved in as a consultant and reflect the doubts, puzzlement and breakdowns in my everyday professional experiences. The reflexive critical analysis of the narratives, drawing on relevant literature from organisational, sociological, psychological and philosophical studies has deepened my inquiry on the major theme of this research – loyalty relations among members of the organisation. The four projects are presented sequentially to make clear to the reader how I have developed my thinking and practice during the evolution of this research and are not subsequently edited at the end of the process of research to demonstrate a movement in both my practice and how I analyse it.

The second section, the synopsis, aims to describe and discuss the main themes that have emerged in my research and to present and explain the key arguments. The synopsis comprises the following sections: a description of the key features of the perspective of complex responsive process of relating, the research methodology including ethical

considerations and research limitations that I identified, a brief summary and further reflexive and critical appraisal of each of the four projects, followed by the contribution to knowledge and practice and ideas and thoughts for further research.

Project 1: Fluctuations in Organisational Identity

Throughout my career I have gained substantial working experiences in a wide range of roles and responsibilities, working from within organisations as well as externally. In this retrospective inquiry, I will attempt to clarify and pinpoint major experiences that shaped my professional identity as well as my way of thinking. Although this inquiry will focus on my vocational path, the attempt to separate between the professional and personal is a rather artificial one - my life experiences (both career and family wise) are strongly intertwined. As an Israeli, my personal narrative also has strong ties to the Israeli collective ethos. Thus, I will also try to deepen my understanding as to how these circumstances moulded my occupational and personal choices.

My Roots

I was born in Israel, the first child of my parents, who immigrated from Europe as young children before World War II. Both of my parents served in the army as young adults in the emerging country, fighting for its independence and survival. Essentially, they were of the founding generation of the state of Israel. I was part of the first generation of children born into this special atmosphere, experiencing survival challenges, wars and continuous conflicts alongside the vast development process of this nation.

My parents were blue-collar workers. They both worked in co-operatives, which were businesses that were owned and operated by their members. This type of organisational structure was quite common in the early years of the state of Israel. It represented socialist ideas that were well ingrained in the young Israeli society aiming for social solidarity. My parents worked in these companies for the vast part of their career. They both had a great sense of loyalty and commitment to their work. These workplaces generated strong interpersonal ties among the members and prioritized employee wellbeing (e.g. family trips across the country and academic scholarships for family members). Both of my parents worked long hours to provide for us. My mother worked her entire life, which was not very common for women back in the day. Thus, working has always been a core value within my family. I remember myself as a teenager, working in summer jobs as an instructor in youth camps or in very basic office jobs. I was not explicitly instructed by my parents to take these

jobs, but perhaps I sensed the importance of work and sharing responsibility through their modelling.

I grew up in a secular home. My grandmother, who lived with us, nurtured me and was in many ways my primary caregiver, since both of my parents were busy at work. As a girl, I don't remember myself resenting my parents for being absent due to their work. I feel that my mother was always attentive when I needed her. In the evenings when she returned from work, she would dedicate time to go over my homework and listen to my stories of the day. I took this reality for granted.

Reflecting on my childhood, I am more aware today of the work-related values I was exposed to in my family. This set of values represent a mindset that perceives the workplace as far more than a means to an end. Rather, it views the organisation as part of a greater cause. In my parents' case, the workplace was perceived, in a sense, as a cornerstone in the efforts to build a new society. Furthermore, friendships, interpersonal relations and caring for others were all viewed as necessary means to promote shared goals and agendas. A strong emphasis was put on the common good versus individual interests.

At the age of 18, I joined the military as every young Israeli is obliged to serve in the army. Serving in the military is mandatory but is also a part of a strong Israeli ethos. I served for two years in the intelligence division, an exclusive unit within the Israeli army. This experience forced me to leave my warm and supportive family nest and become more independent. My service demanded personal responsibility, continuous training, and a meticulous detail-oriented approach. This experience generated a desire to fill additional informal roles beyond the scope of my position. These included mentoring new soldiers who joined the unit as well as helping them fit in socially by initiating different social events. I was part of a small, secluded army unit, remotely stationed. These circumstances amplified my sense of responsibility to generate a supportive social environment in the stressful challenges we faced. Furthermore, my army service has instilled in me the belief that even in settings with a strict behavioural code, there is the freedom to impact interpersonal relationships among peers even within a command hierarchy. At the end of my service, the

'Yom-Kippur' war broke out and I was called to stay in my position longer than expected. This period was characterized by immense fear for my friends' lives, serving at the front. During the war I lost a close friend who was missing in action for a long time. This was a time of great helplessness: clinging to shreds of information regarding the survival of my friends and facing rumors about terrible losses. I found myself searching photos of soldiers taken captive, looking desperately to find my friend. These were days of extreme shifts between great fear and hope. At the same time, I had to maintain my duties as a soldier, working in shifts around the clock. I remember the sharp awareness of feeling that war is not a solution while experiencing rage, frustration, and disappointment from the political leaders who chose to pursue this path without generating any alternative direction.

A study by the historian Hanna Yablonka (2018) presents a historical perspective on this time period and sheds light on the social and ideological context in which I grew up in. In her narrative based research, Yablonka discusses distinctive characteristics of the first generation of children who were born in Israel after the establishment of the country, named the 'new state generation'. I personally belong to this generation. According to Yablonka's study, most of the children from this generation were born to parents who survived the holocaust or immigrated from Europe. They saw in their children the hope for continuity and survival of the Jewish people, along with an expectation to form a new Israeli identity; one which is more resilient and self-reliant. According to Yablonka, the 'new state generation' takes for granted the fact that they have a homeland, which is an undeniable reality. Thus, there was an explicit expectation from these children to have a strong sense of identification with their country, to be highly conforming to the social norms and to take part in further developing and defending the country. This generation experienced the Yom Kippur war as young soldiers. The devastating outcomes of the war were the tipping point in the blind national-based identification this generation had.

The process of internalizing ideology to the extent that it becomes part of one's self is addressed by Stacey and Mowles (2016): 'Ideology can be thought of as an imaginative 'whole' – that is, simultaneously the obligatory restriction of the norm and the voluntary compulsion of value, constituting the evaluative criteria for the choice of actions. As such it

is largely habitual, and so unconscious, process of self and social at the same time' (p. 397). Retrospectively, the identification with a greater cause and a sense of loyalty were values that I absorbed growing up. Later on, I brought these values into other working environments which I was involved in. Identifying with a unified ideology, on the one hand, encourages a strong sense of belonging which provides a great support in times of crisis. On the other hand, it undermined the possibility of questioning the one-dimensional agenda and even being unaware of the option to raise doubts.

Striving for Normalcy

Right after the war, overwhelmed with personal and national grief, I started my academic studies without pausing to reflect or digest on what I had just been through. At that time, I did not give this rapid shift any special attention, I symbolically 'took off' my army uniform and adapted quickly into student life. Only years later did I begin questioning this abrupt transition. In retrospect, this choice was a means of suppressing the pain, the deep sense of destruction, in favour of starting a new path and beginning my academic studies. My decision to invest my time in academic work (studying and being a research assistant) was an attempt to grasp control. Even if this sense of control was completely subjective and illusory, it was perceived as an attempt to create order in a chaotic and disrupted reality. Furthermore, I realized that my coping mechanism for dealing with pain and a sense of helplessness, is to quickly shift into a 'doing' mode without allowing myself to take the time to process the actual experience. I will further elaborate on this in the coming chapters.

My attraction to social sciences came naturally. I believe that my army service had a pivotal impact on this initial academic choice. After completing my Bachelor's degree in social sciences I continued my studies and went on to a Master's in social psychology. This choice was based on my desire to work with healthy individuals, focusing on the potent, vital and productive aspects of humans and organisations. These studies were science oriented with a strong emphasis on statistics and research methods. I was drawn to the more practical courses; I found that the most meaningful experience within these years was the practicum. In this experience I felt that I was finally exposed to people instead of only theories and methodologies.

In this practicum I was assigned to a project within a manufacturing factory. The HR manager of the factory had hired the consultants to investigate the problem of frequent workplace accidents on the assembly line causing excessive employee absences. As part of the consulting team, I was requested to conduct one-on-one structured interviews with the employees. I conducted short interviews 'on the clock'. I felt as though I was part of this 'production line': running consecutive interviews in a mechanical way. As the day progressed, I felt that I became less attentive and increasingly disconnected from the interviewees' answers. At one point a woman, my mother's age, entered the room. She sat in front of me and answered laconically 'yes' or 'no' answers to my questions. Something in her voice or gestures drew my attention. I put aside the formal questionnaire and asked her to tell me about herself and a conversation started. She shared her feelings of being humiliated by her team leader who rebuked her harshly for any mistake that was done without providing any explanation. She said that she feared losing her job and begged me not to report her complaints. I was agitated and felt her vulnerability. I realized how limited and inadequate the structured questionnaire method was, compared to the power of a true dialogue. I experienced a dissonance between the way I was educated to explore human behaviour through a scientific methodology, and my actual experience in those interpersonal meetings.

Career 'Baby Steps'

My first work experience was at the training centre of one of the major banks in Israel. This centre provided work-related training for employees and managers on financial issues and customer care. As a trainer, I was responsible for developing behavioural skills that were relevant to the trainees' positions, focusing on customer relations. I worked in collaboration with financial trainers and together we tried to map specific skill sets that were relevant for the mentees. For this purpose, I interviewed and collected scenarios from the day-to-day experiences of these service providers. In the development of these training modules, I held the following guiding assumptions: First, I believed that the participants' exposure to various scenarios illustrating client interactions ('If-then') will have a positive and direct impact on their reactions to different service-related situations. My second assumption was that

getting the participants to be more aware of the dynamics of interpersonal communication will enable them to manage it more effectively, based on the 'sender-receiver model' (Shannon & Weaver, 1949). The 'sender-receiver model' describes the interpersonal communications as analogous to communication through the telephone: the individual formulates the idea in his own brain, translates the idea to words and sends it to the other, who receives the words and converts it back to an idea. This model is based on the cognitive approach, which views the individual mind as an information-processing device and that human thinking is highly rational when functioning properly. Applying this model allowed me, as a young trainer, to rely on well-structured methodological approaches. This enabled me to be in sync with the 'banking language', which was seen as by nature more rational, based on mathematics, accuracy and control.

Looking back from a more mature point of view, I recognize that this way of thinking was based on a very practical and instrumental approach that assumes that we can predict most of the situations that individuals encounter. Accordingly, we can train them to act in specific ways. In addition, it is based on the standpoint that 'one size fits all'. This assumption is based on cybernetic systems theory (Ashby, 1956) and of cause-and-effect linearity and predictability, a mindset that relies on statistical forecasts. This concrete view suited the early stages of my professional path. In hindsight, I can identify my need to provide practical, ready-made tools and solutions for managers in the bank that were facing customer relationship challenges.

During those initial years of moulding my professional identity, I had a chance to work closely with a seasoned mentor, who represented a wide and interdisciplinary professional approach. He encouraged me to read poetry and philosophical texts as a way to challenge and enrich my point of view. One such example is the writings of Martin Buber, whose philosophical approach focuses on the relationship and the dialogical nature of existence, and emphasizes the subjective existence of human beings that occurs only within their relationship and dialogue with others. In his words:

Man wishes to be confirmed in his being by man and wishes to have a presence in the being of the other.... Secretly and bashfully he watches for a YES which allows him to be and which can come to him only from one human person to another.
(Martin Buber, 1970, p. 104)

Buber makes a fundamental distinction between two different orientations in which individuals engage with each other: 'I-You' (aka 'Thou') versus 'I-It' relations. 'I-You' relations occur between two human-beings, whilst the 'other' in this relationship does not serve as a means to an end in providing one's own desires. The relationship between I and You is authentic, honest, mutual and focuses on the co-presence of both partners. In contrast, 'I-It' relations are instrumental by nature, and the 'other' is perceived as an object in the service of fulfilling one's needs and desires (Smith, 2000, 2009). According to Buber, knowing oneself demands an authentic encounter with another human being. My exposure to Buber's writing provided me with a new perspective for understanding human interactions.

Working at the bank's training centre, the main focus was on functional interactions circling around a concrete objective between a service provider and the customer. Buber's approach outlined a different type of human interaction, one that was based on listening, generosity and reciprocity. At the time I found it difficult to assimilate this novel approach into human interactions within the bank's scope; these customer relations centered around measurable objectives and did not allow for a more mutual 'I-You' relation. As a trainer (and later as a consultant) I felt that I faced high expectations to provide concrete solutions to the day-to-day issues.

Such a discrepancy was manifested when I was approached to assist in designing a development program aimed for implementing a new service process in the bank. This process was initially designed by industrial engineers; as such it was linear, structured and timed. I didn't agree with this mechanistic approach, which was opposed to the bank's attempts to establish a more relation-based customer service. This generated a conflict between myself and the engineering team. Looking back, this debate represented a major gap between the two approaches: viewing the organization as a 'machine' versus perceiving

the organisation as a space for interpersonal relations. The engineering approach was based on the scientific management theory (which goes back to Taylor, 1911) that emphasizes efficient organisational performance. The methodology according to this approach calls for deconstructing the process into segmented components while evaluating each one separately and generating standardization for each action in the process. The individual worker is evaluated according to these standardized measures. The assumptions of this approach are problematic since it assumes that human beings are just rational and perceives the organisational process in a linear mode confined to 'if-then' occurrences (Stacey & Mowles, 2016, p. 59).

This conflict was in contrast to my strong need, in those initial years of my career, to position myself as an 'expert' professional who is able to bring real value to the managers I worked with, with regard to the challenges they faced. Looking back at this time, my efforts to hold on to the 'expert' position - while working in a goal-oriented and measurable environment - may have debilitated my ability to see and bring into practice the consulting relationship as an 'I-You' relationship. Thus, these relationships were more instrumental and functional by nature (aka 'I-It').

Opening Up to the Power of Group Dynamics

While working at the bank, as a trainer and later on as an organisational consultant, I felt dissatisfied about working with pre-scripted scenarios aimed at training employees. I found myself often questioning what value and impact I bring within the scope of my position. My urge to design and facilitate management development programmes, together with my interest in inquiring more fully into the nature of groups, led me to enrol in an intensive group facilitation programme.

Participating in a two-year group facilitation programme was a formative experience in my professional development. The learning programme provided a comprehensive experience which included being a group member, observer, co-facilitator and facilitator. It involved both 'hands-on' experiences, as well as a more meta conceptualization of group processes.

In my experience, the programme was simultaneously emotionally shocking and empowering. I remember that I struggled with my urge to take a risk and speak up in the group versus my fear and wish to remain safe and 'on-guard'. This 'guarded' style is something that still characterises me today when entering new group processes. Perhaps this coping mechanism answers my need for control in such situations that generate higher levels of anxiety.

During the programme, I was exposed to two powerful conceptualisations: the concept of 'mirroring' (Foulkes, 1964) and the power of the 'here and now' (Yalom, 1995). Foulkes (1964), a psychoanalyst, defined the 'hall of mirrors' concept as a series of reactions that are aroused within the individual in the group in response to the behaviours and evocations of the others (in Berger, 2012).

A person sees himself, or a part of himself – often a repressed part of himself – reflected in the interactions of other group members. He sees them reacting in the way he does himself, or in contrast to his own behaviour... He also gets to know himself ... by the effect he has upon others and the picture they form of him (p. 110).

As a group facilitator, I often find myself inviting participants to self-reflection through multiple 'lenses' held by other individuals within the working group as a means of developing an awareness of the consequences one's actions have for others.

Another valuable concept I was exposed to during this programme, was the importance given to present ('here and now') experiences in the group process. This conceptualisation, introduced by Yalom (1995), calls to direct attention to 'here and now' occurrences within the group, while placing relatively less importance on the developmental history of individual participants. Yalom's approach represented a different approach to the ones I was more accustomed to in my line of work back then. Working in the bank training centre, my main working tool was applying pre-written scripts, which centred around customer service. Observing my own feelings 'in the moment' as in the realms of as others' feelings

has become another meaningful tool for me to get a sense of the undercurrents within the group.

Both perspectives – the ‘Hall of Mirrors’ and the ‘Here and Now’ directed my attention to the overt behavioural layer of the group members. Bion’s (1961) paradigm which I was exposed to during the facilitation programme, provided me with a different viewpoint on unconscious processes within the group. Bion (1961) distinguished between two states of group behaviour: A rational *working group* mindset occurs when the group works towards the completion of a mutual goal (aka the ‘*primary task*’). The unconscious mode manifests itself when the group adopts a basic assumption (such as ‘Dependency’, ‘Fight-flight’, and ‘Pairing’) as a basis for its work. These basic assumptions, according to Bion, prevent the group from working on its primary task. The distinction between these states, helped me to be more aware of the states of anxiety that group members adopt in order to momentarily quieten their anxiety. Moreover, it enabled me to detect difficulties in shifting towards a more functional mode aimed at the primary task the team is attempting to accomplish.

These major paradigms continue to guide me in my current consulting work. In the concluding session of a recent project in which I was working with a team of female leaders, I invited the women to share their feelings about the ending process. Instead, they consistently avoided discussing the group’s separation and shifted the discussion into practical, organisational matters. Bearing in mind the ‘here and now’ perspective, I was able to pinpoint this pattern in real time and direct the participants’ awareness to it. Bion’s approach helped me be in touch with the anxiety the women experienced, losing a meaningful support group as they perceived it. I was able to mirror this unconscious undercurrent in the final session which aroused a more intimate discussion.

The actual participation in the learning programme provided tremendous value. However, when I tried to apply these practices in organisations as part of the development and training processes, I faced negative reactions from decision makers. Group facilitation practices are commonly based on the psychodynamic tradition in psychology. As such, they are open and unstructured in essence. Therefore, there is almost an inherent conflict between these perspectives versus well-defined, structured organisational processes. For

this reason, in my experience, trying to implement these methods in organisations faces objections that can be associated with two main continuums: unconscious and rational polarity and process versus result-oriented states. With regard to the 'unconscious-rational' continuum, while working at the bank and later on in other organisations, I found that the tendency of the management practitioners is to focus on functional and rational working processes which are perceived as more controllable. Regarding the polarity between goal versus process-oriented there is an expectation that the development programmes will be in congruence with the organisational discourse aimed at measurable and time-targeted objectives. This perception inevitably conflicts the dynamic, process-oriented nature of group interventions.

Acquiring New Lenses for Organisational Analysis

To return to the history of the influences on my practice at work, I left the bank after seven formative years, due to a job offer my husband received in the United States. During our years abroad, I completed an additional master's degree in organisational psychology at Columbia University. The timing of this learning experience - occurring right after gaining fieldwork experience at the bank - made it much more valuable since it enabled me to examine the applicability and relevance of the learned theoretical models. In addition, whereas my work at the bank focused on group processes, this academic programme introduced me to the domain of organisations as systems.

In the course of my studies, I was exposed to Warner Burke's organisational framework. Burke's methodological approach to organisational diagnostics and interventions (Burke, 2018) is based on the 'open systems' approach, which was originally developed by the biologist Von Bertalanffy (1950), who regarded human organisations as 'open systems'. According to Katz & Kahan (1978), who adapted the 'open systems' framework to organisations: '...Open systems maintain themselves through constant commerce with their environment, that is, a continuous inflow and outflow of energy through permeable boundary' (pp. 21,22).

This approach considers organisations as open systems, where the term ‘systems’ is used in the sense that they consist of a number of sub-systems that are interrelated and interconnected, and the idea that they are ‘open’ implies that they are interconnected with their environment. Learning this approach made me much more aware of the importance of the environment in which organisations operate. Furthermore, it emphasised the importance of managing the boundaries of the organisation, such as importing resources and exporting outputs. Additionally, it emphasised the inherent interdependencies and on-going feedback processes across different organisational sub-systems, as well as between the organisation and its environment. In this interconnected realm, a change in one sub-system or the exterior environment will inevitably impact another sub-system. Another major contribution of this theoretical paradigm is the understanding that destructive processes (‘entropy’) are an integral aspect of organisational systems.

Based on the open systems approach, several organisational models were designed (e.g. Weisbord’s six-box model, 1976; Nadler-Tushman’s congruence model, 1977; or Burke-Litwin’s causal model of organisational performance and change, 1992). These models became practical working tools for my involvement in organisational analysis and intervention processes.

Looking back, these models that are based on the system thinking approach provided me with working tools in my consulting work. In addition, they also gave me the opportunity to become a partner in the strategic management discourse in the organisation. The managerial discussion was and still is based on attempts to forecast future changes in the environment, and consequently to design strategic and working plans. As an organisational consultant and an HR manager, I was required to forecast the personnel turnover, to identify knowledge gaps between the current situation and the desired future situation, and to methodologically design organisational changes. However, my actual consulting experience provoked fundamental questions regarding the underlying assumptions of these models:

1. The issue of organisation-environment boundaries: The open systems approach assumes that there are well-defined boundaries which distinguish between those

who are a part of the organisation and others who are not. In the current complex reality that organisations are operating in, the boundaries between the organisation and its environment are quite blurred (e.g., a client can be simultaneously a vendor, and a competitor can also fill a role of a business partner).

2. The issue of managing boundaries: managing boundaries according to this approach is aimed at protecting the organisation from environmental fluctuations and by this, allowing the organisation to adapt more effectively to such changes. In order to manage the organisational boundaries, regulatory functions need to be applied. Successful management is measured by its ability to reach and sustain a stable equilibrium. In such a complex organisational reality, managers' attempts to predict future changes and to control the environmental disruptions tend to fail.
3. The issue of stability versus change: The underlying assumption of the open systems theory is that the ongoing process of importing resources, transforming them and then exporting outputs with continuous feedback, will generate stability and equilibrium. This perspective assumes a linear and sequential process. In practice, many changes and fluctuations in the environment, as well as within the organisation simultaneously provoke order and chaos, change and stability.

A Battle for Life

Shortly after our return back to Israel, my younger daughter was diagnosed with leukemia at the age of six. This was a major life-changing event that we experienced as a family. Tamar had to fight for her life and we all struggled with her. At that time, our life centered around extensive chemotherapy treatments and long hospitalization periods while trying to maintain our family togetherness. Our life course changed abruptly. My husband and I decided that I would resign from my job and focus completely on this battle for life. We spent long days and sleepless nights in the hospital together with our daughter, taking care of her, worrying and trying to support her in her efforts to heal. All this while also worrying and taking care of our eldest daughter. Although we felt at many times helpless, we joined forces to deal with Tamar's illness.

My husband and I worked as a team, fighting together in this forced battle. In the many 'highs and lows' of the period, we found a way to support each other and shower our girls with endless love and a strong belief that we will overcome adversity. We tried to create islands of normalcy for our family at this difficult time. During these years we received immense support from our extended family and friends. The values of friendship and mutual support, that I absorbed as a child, were one of the sources of strength during this hardship. Thankfully my daughter got well and after some time, she went back to school. I decided it was time to go back to work and started my working journey at a high-tech company. The need to be part of a structured setting was essential. Going back to work symbolized a 'coming back to life', being part of something vital and healthy.

In retrospect, this was a renewed opportunity to once again become involved in positive and invigorating working projects. A healing process that in hindsight, I identified as my way to deal with times of crisis. Being presently aware of this, I understand that many times I expect others to cope with difficulties in a similar proactive manner, while I am less tolerant to responses of weakness or helplessness.

Cracks in Employee - Organisation Loyalty

Upon my daughter's recovery, I went back to work as an Organisational Development (OD) consultant for a high-tech company. This company developed cutting-edge telecommunication technology and was growing at a fast pace. As an OD consultant, my main working efforts were targeted at supporting the company managers who were dealing with various organisational and managerial challenges such as accelerated onboarding processes of new employees, managing interdisciplinary teams, designing and implementing organisational changes due to accelerated organisational growth. Most of the managers at the time shifted into these managerial roles from technological positions, thus lacked relevant executive experience. Some introduced the hierarchical commanding style that they were familiar with from their army experiences, yet this style was inadequate for the dynamic and collaborative working environment of the organisation. Designing and leading the management development programmes was a central part of my work in those years. I believed back then that these programmes were more than just a means for training,

enrichment and self-development in that they were also a framework for creating a common language and systematic view.

Reflecting on this period, I can identify more clearly a few working assumptions that guided me back then, although I was not aware of them. I assumed that investing resources in management development would have a direct impact on employees' identification with the organisational vision and mission. Consequently, people would be more engaged and therefore would be willing to invest their time and efforts for this shared cause.

Furthermore, I believed that these developmental processes were a means of generating interpersonal relationships between the managers, coming from different divisions and as such would be able to create 'organisational harmony' that supports realising the organisational vision. My approach was based on humanistic psychological assumptions (e.g., Peters and Waterman, 1982). Accordingly, an organisation can succeed as long as its people are more emotionally involved, share values and principles, believe in the organisational mission and view their personal contribution to the organisation as significant. This approach relies on the systems dynamics theory in which organisations are controlled by the vision and the values, and restraining any deviations from them (Senge, 1990).

This perception of shared vision and mission was further undermined as the hi-tech industry evolved at an exponential pace during the years of 1990-2000 in Israel. The demand for experienced managers and engineers grew accordingly and employees resigned at a high rate for competing job offers. The sense of loyalty and belonging to the organisation declined dramatically. The management was frustrated at losing talented engineers and searched for solutions to retain staff.

I recall an event when I was requested to join a meeting with the division's CEO and with the sales VP. In that meeting, the CEO shared his concerns regarding the multiple resignations, especially of key engineers and salespeople. He asked me to design a retention plan. At that meeting he also asked to clarify why I rejected a request to subsidize an MBA

programme for a key sales manager who had threatened to resign. I explained that this academic programme was under the auspices of an unaccredited business school and by confirming such a programme, we would be disrespecting the value and importance of higher education. My position on this matter was rejected and in an attempt to satisfy the employee, he was granted his request. In addition, I was requested to prohibit staff having goodbye parties for employees who resigned. The CEO claimed that these events might provoke others to consider whether to stay or leave. Even though the management was not behind these gatherings, the parties continued.

In retrospect, the CEO and the management members' reactions expressed a loss of control. The management's attempt to present practical solutions when faced with uncontrollable circumstances evoked major issues such as: what behaviours were being rewarded (loyalty, retention, performance)? Who was being rewarded (one who threatened to leave)? How did we compensate employees?

This aspect of employee-organisation affiliation made me reconsider my fundamental assumptions regarding the workplace. In a sense, it challenged my perception of the workplace as a community that works collaboratively towards a shared vision. This matter was even more accentuated when the 'Dotcom' bubble burst (2000-2001) and the company had to lay off hundreds of employees, as did many other companies in the industry. This time the direction of loyalty was reversed and it centered on the organisation's commitment to its employees.

As an HR manager in the company, I had to manage the employment termination process. I spent days and nights planning this complex process in a way that would meet the business' downsizing needs while still maintaining human values such as transparency, respect, and support. We met each one of these people and tried to provide emotional practical and financial support during this difficult period. In addition, we supported the managers who had to execute these layoffs.

I remember being torn between these two poles: the organisational needs and the individual ones. This tension was amplified when I had to represent the company in wrongful termination of employment claims filed by former employees. It was extremely difficult to meet these colleagues, people who were recently laid-off, in court. I was in the formal position of representing the company's interests, while still feeling great empathy for their pain and disappointment. I recall myself before appearing in court having nightmares about these people and their families. Yet, I held onto my belief that this process of downsizing was critical for the company's survival and was conducted with fairness and respect. This rationalisation enabled me to work towards strengthening the managers and employees who remained, into moving forward from this crisis.

A Cross-Cultural Encounter: a 'We - They' Split

Following the 'Dotcom' bubble burst, the company's management decided to spin off the Business Unit (BU), which I was part of, and to merge it with a USA-based company that developed complementary technology. This decision was forced upon the employees on both sides, and they had to choose whether to continue their employment under the newly merged entity or resign. I was offered to lead the Post-Merger Integration (PMI) process and later to be the Vice President (VP) HR of the recently merged company. The companies each continued to have their own management. The two managements worked in parallel, functioning as the expanded management of the merged company.

Reflecting back, employees in both companies, went through an emotional separation process from their previous affiliation. This strong affiliation, as I saw it back then, was a core pillar in the identity of each of the two companies: The Israeli counterparts had to disassociate from their 'mother ship' and the Americans from their 'Silicon Valley' startup identity.

In order to align both management teams to the upcoming change process, I presented Kotter's '8 step process for leading change' (Kotter, 1996). I believed that such a structured and rational model could provide the framework for a productive discussion and roadmap regarding planning the merger process. This model highlights the need to carefully structure

and plan such a change execution by following a strict series of phases. These phases include the following: (1) Establishing a sense of urgency; (2) Forming a powerful guiding coalition; (3) Creating a vision; (4) Communicating the vision; (5) Empowering others to act on the vision; (6) Planning for and creating short-term wins; (7) Consolidating improvements and (8) Institutionalizing new approaches.

I generated a discussion within the extended management team to define the rationale behind the merger. This was in accordance with phase one in Kotter's model, which highlights the sense of urgency driving the change. We drafted the shared narrative and vision of the merging company. My working assumption back then was that if we managed to establish a wide acceptance of the ideas for the future of the company (according to phase 2 in Kotter's model), then we would be able to engage the employees in this aspired vision. This notion was based on the management's belief that by having an inspiring vision, people would feel engaged to believe in it and would create harmony (based on Peters and Waterman's *'in Search of Excellence'* research, 1982). I believed that direct interactions between people on both sites would help dismantle the barriers between the groups and foster work collaborations. During this process, I encouraged managers to communicate 'short-term wins' in order to increase the level of conviction in the recently merged entity (according to phase six in Kotter's model).

Looking back, the merger process was more complex than applying a linear model, which assumes that change can be managed as a structured, top-down process. The model does not take into account the disturbances or the complexities of the processes, and neither the emotional component which is deeply ingrained in such change processes. The disputes between both sites ranged across many issues (such as R&D methodologies, marketing approaches to customers, bonus budget and allocation). Those power struggles were well-ingrained within the discourse and crossed ranks. In addition, the uncertainty regarding the new company's future amplified those disagreements and reflected a profound struggle regarding the power base (the USA versus Israel). These struggles deepened a 'splitting' mindset of 'us versus them' and 'good versus bad'.

Back then, I tried to understand the 'us versus them' mindset through the unconscious activation of a 'splitting' defense mechanism. 'Splitting' is a common psychodynamic defense mechanism (both in personal and organisational domains) which is employed when facing situations of uncertainty and anxiety, evoking a strong dichotomy between 'good versus bad' in an attempt to impose a new order. In this attempt, negative elements are projected onto others (Dean, 2004). This standpoint blocks potential collaborations with external parties (e.g. other units within the organisation or external partners).

One such example that I experienced of this 'splitting' mindset related to me being criticised by both groups as being one-sided. The Americans saw me as an Israeli who favoured the Israeli team while the Israelis 'blamed' me for being pro-American, and thus discriminating against the Israeli group. I was torn between sides and tried to take a role of a mediator between the conflicting needs while many times failing to bridge these gaps and differences.

My face-to-face meetings with employees and the managers at the American site provided me with a closer look at the setbacks that hindered the integration process. The American counterparts shared their frustration with the working interactions with their Israeli peers. One of the most salient examples centered around the differences in the perception of authority. While the Israelis found it appropriate to voice opposing views to anyone in every forum and on any subject, even if that person outranked them, this manner of behaviour was completely unacceptable in the American site, where conflicts with one's supervisor would only take place in a private conversation and not in public. The Israeli style was experienced by the Americans as being rather aggressive and insulting. The Israelis, on the other hand, claimed that their American colleagues were passive and did not express their opinions in a clear and forward way. The general feeling of frustration brought me to assume that there are deep-rooted cultural gaps across teams. These gaps served as a major obstacle for proper interpersonal communication and contributed to distorted interpretations given to different organisational situations.

Trying to thoroughly understand the differences between these cultures, I relied on two conceptual models: the first was Schein's Model (1990), and the second was Hofstede's

(1980) cultural dimensions Theory. My working assumption was that a method-based inquiry would help the management and myself to better understand and decode the origins of the conflict. Schein's Model (1990) focuses on organisational values, and the basic underlying assumptions of the organisational culture, whereas Hofstede's Model (1980) attempts to introduce typologies of national cultures and their effect on the organisation's culture (such as power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity and long- versus short-term orientation).

Aiming to decode, at least to a certain extent, these taken-for-granted, underlying assumptions, I conducted an organisational survey, observations of cross geographical team meetings and interviews. This process made me understand how difficult it was to decipher those codes. Looking back, it is possible that the approach I took in an attempt to tap into these undercurrents was doomed to failure: applying scientific analysis tools to examine overt behaviours, reactions, feelings, and beliefs were unsuitable for this purpose. It only allowed for a partial explanation regarding the variance in perceptions and resistant barriers between the groups. In addition to the inter-group gaps, I realised that there were also significant differences within each group (Israeli and American) regarding the company's way of doing things. Thus, the opposing 'us versus them' categories were not the full story of why things were not working.

Looking back with the benefit of hindsight, I realise that I did not fully understand the dynamics of 'we-they' narratives and how they had emerged. Recently while reading Elias & Scotson's research (1994) this dynamic became more crystalized. This research focused on the dynamics between two groups who lived in the same neighbourhood: The 'Established group' had lived in this neighbourhood for several generations and had a strong degree of cohesion and collective identification. The 'Outsiders' were a new group of residence in the neighbourhood. The 'Established group' developed a strong sense of belonging and superiority over the 'Outsiders'. According to Elias and Scotson, the key function of any ideology is to create binary oppositions which lead to 'us versus them' perceptions as well as to maintaining power relation differences. Based on Elias and Scotson's conceptual framework, I realise now that the perpetual split between the two merging companies, can

be interpreted as a defensive reaction to the experience of the loss of identity and the sustaining its bases of power.

The leading team gradually realised that the model of two parallel management teams was just not feasible. With time, the Israeli managers were forced to report to the American management, and their status was substantially diminished. I also experienced the same process: the board decided to recruit a designated HR manager for the American site. At first, we were both leading the HR department in a parallel manner. Gradually, my position was devalued. My scope of impact was narrowed down to include the Israeli site alone – a process that frustrated me immensely. I decided to resign after a long period of discontent. It was hard for me to leave the company mainly because it meant leaving my Israeli colleagues after many years of working together. Perhaps the values of loyalty and responsibility that were instilled in me growing up, made me feel like I was leaving my friends behind. At the end of the day, I felt drained and burnt out.

Exploring New Grounds: an External and Unaffiliated Position

One of the initial projects in which I was involved in as an external consultant demonstrates this dilemma. I was approached by a VP HR of a global family business which developed pharmaceutical drugs. She sought my assistance in designing a leadership development programme for their senior managers. At our first meeting, the HR manager shared with me that the CEO of the company refused to work with external consultants and preferred that she led this development programme. This CEO's attitude reinforced my own doubts regarding the value I was able to bring in my position as an external consultant. The issue of being excluded by the CEO continued to frustrate me and I suggested that I meet him. The three of us met. In our meeting, I introduced myself and then invited the CEO to share his background, the company's history and the foundation of the Israeli site. The CEO shared that his grandfather's wish was that he would join the family business as a grown-up and that the company would continue to be led by family members only and not by 'strangers'. This conversation, and the following ones, raised issues of trust versus being suspicious of 'outsiders' and the value of belonging as a condition for organisational identification and

engagement. In hindsight, I realized that those open dialogues with the CEO were a platform for a mutual reflective process inquiring into issues of belonging, trust and loyalty.

Summary and Identifying Key Themes

This reflexive and introspective inquiry has allowed me to unveil the set of beliefs, values and assumptions that have guided my way of thinking and my work in organisations. According to Stacey & Mowles (2016), our belief system is 'so ingrained in who we are that we are unaware of what this ideological basis is' (p. 392). In this retrospective reflection, the themes of identification and loyalty have emerged. As such, I would like to further explore these themes in my next projects.

While concluding this project, I find myself reflecting on the core values that were instilled in me as a child growing up. Both my parents took part in the establishment of the young Jewish state and were deeply affected by the Zionist narrative, that emphasised the pressing need to create a safe haven for Holocaust survivors. Their strong belief and identification with this 'greater cause' had a major presence both explicitly and implicitly at our home discussions and activities. Their strong identification was also manifested in their working places, which served as means of being a part of a greater 'whole'. As a child, I was exposed to the centrality of work and the great sense of loyalty, dedication, and commitment my parents had for the organisations they were affiliated with. Friendships and solidarity were intertwined within the professional domain, and I perceived these 'work' relationships as our extended family.

Looking back on my career, I am able to recognise this pattern of high organisational identification and engagement in my vocational path: my affiliation with the organisation was in a sense a translation of the social ideology that was instilled in me when I was growing up. Being part of an organisation served as a major anchor in my professional development and in the formation of my vocational self. I chose to see the working arena as an environment which provided me with continuous learning, growth, and creation. This experience was amplified at times when I faced crisis and personal loss. Confronted with personal distressing situations (war and illness), the workplace symbolized a 'healing space'

and the opportunity to 'get back to life'. It allowed me to be in touch with my potent inner resources, as well as gaining a subjective sense of control. Being exposed to humanistic psychological theories in my academic studies, reinforced this way of thinking which regarded the working arena as a space for personal development and growth. These theories validated my approach that being highly engaged with the organisational vision and values, generates a sense of meaning to one's actions and in turn promotes organisational success. This perception of the working arena as grounds for development and growth, motivated me to promote management development programmes and various learning programmes, in an attempt to foster a nurturing and benevolent working environment.

My working assumption then, which was based on the learning organisation theory (Senge, 1990), was that if we were to succeed to build a good team spirit, then a true dialogue would evolve among team members. This kind of dialogue would enable knowledge sharing and open conversation on the team's 'mental models' (Senge,1990). Thus, organisational learning would occur. These efforts also represented my belief that investing in employee development will have a direct effect on their sense of organisational belonging and their positive attributions of the organisation.

In retrospect, I recognise how my need to impact the sense of employee loyalty and identification is combined with my need to create organisational 'harmony'. My perspective debilitates my view on exploitative and conflictual aspects inherent in the working environments. This mindset has often motivated me to adopt a mediating role, aiming to find alternative compromises to conflicts within an organisation. In different organisational interventions, such as managing the post-merger integration, my mediating approach failed. Many efforts were devoted to creating a new, integrated sense of 'we' with a shared narrative and vision. However, splitting forces were much stronger and the 'us versus them' split prevailed. From a more critical point of view, I can identify the manipulative aspect of these efforts to generate an identification between the individual and organisational goals. By this, these development programmes became a means for normative forms of control.

These experiences left me with questions to further inquire into the nature of employee – organisational affiliation and my role as an OD consultant in these relationships. This issue is

more pressing than ever nowadays, as a result of intense changes that organisations are confronted with. These exponential changes on both organisational and employee levels intensify the issue of affiliation, organisational identification, and mutual loyalty.

In my coming projects, as part of the learning on the Doctor of Management Programme, I would like to further inquire into organisation-employee attachment from various aspects: How has employee-organisation attachment been transformed along the years and what has influenced this diminishing affiliation? How does this tendency affect identities and a sense of 'I' and 'we'? I would like to further explore the processes of identity formation with regards to organisational affiliation from different perspectives, primarily from the viewpoint of complex responsive processes. I intend to tackle these questions by analysing consulting interventions in which I am involved in, as well as reflecting on my own personal prism as an organisational consultant, being both attached and detached from the organisation.

Project 2: A Woman to Woman Programme – Attachment, Identification and Loyalty

Introduction

In Project 1, I reflected upon my professional development over the years together with the theoretical concepts that have guided my way of thinking and working. My reflections made me realise the prominence and importance I have attributed to organisation-employee attachment. This realisation encouraged me to deepen my understanding of issues related to the sense of identification and employees' experiences of loyalty. From these reflections I went on to explore my own experiences relating to loyalty and how these may impact the ways in which I conduct my consultancy work.

Narrative

Introduction

I was approached by Nina, an Organisational Development (OD) director of a global company, based in Israel, to design and lead a programme for senior female managers who wished to support other women who have either just embarked on their first management role in the company or who wished to pursue a managerial role. This initiative was congruent with the company's declared policy of advancing diversity and inclusion and in particular, to expand the representation of women in professional and executive positions. Today, the company employs 15,000 people globally, with a 50:50 gender divide, while at the senior management positions only 20% are female executives. This picture of women's presence at the executive level is similar to that found in other Western and Israeli corporations (McKinsey, 2018; Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2019).

Following a few meetings with Nina, the OD manager, together with the female managers who had initiated the project and myself, we agreed that the programme would include six senior female executives as mentors, with each mentor coaching five junior female managers. The mentoring programme was composed of six sessions, combining preparation for leading mentoring groups together with serving as a colleagues' support forum for discussing challenges and dilemmas, while conducting their mentoring groups' sessions.

In the following narrative, I will present the first and the concluding sessions of the mentoring programme. Those sessions demonstrate changes that gradually evolved within the mentoring group while discussing the way gender issues were addressed within the company.

Mentoring Programme – First Session

A full day meeting was held to launch the programme, including the participation of Nina, the OD director, the six female-executives and myself. While I knew Nina well, but none of the other participants knew each other before this first meeting. The female executives were around 35-40 years old, representing different professional disciplines, such as finance, marketing, engineering, and law, and exercising senior executive roles. They had all volunteered to be mentors.

Upon starting the meeting, the participants introduced themselves and openly discussed their strong desire to support young women entering managerial positions and to share their personal experiences with them. In contrast to other groups that I have facilitated, I was surprised at how open the women were with each other from the very beginning of the meeting, sharing their excitement at being part of the mentoring process. All of them expressed a candid wish for a place to pause and take a break from their routine commitments, as this programme would allow. They wanted a space that would enable mutual learning and create a sense of meaning, something that does not occur during their routine work lives on a daily basis, they said, particularly not in an all-female framework. They even expressed their aspiration to extend their circle of influence and make an impact on the company's policy regarding female's promotion. With hindsight, I did not pay attention to this ambition. I was more attuned to their messages and even more to their tone of voice, when expressing their wishes to mentor the young female managers and contribute to them from their own experiences.

A conversation about the voice and style they bring as managers into their (male orientated) management group meetings, was opened up. Shiri, one of the mentors, shared that she often wondered whether it is legitimate to bring anecdotes from home or from interactions

with her employees into these management meetings, as they may be perceived as being 'emotional' and not sufficiently assertive. On the other hand, men freely bring up incidents from sporting events, which lead to her feeling excluded. Shiri asked whether they were expected to adopt a goal orientated, decisive lingo, which she understood as a masculine style of speech. Norma confided that she recently had been told that if she smiled while making a presentation to the board, she would be 'perceived as being unprofessional and not serious'. While listening to the mentors I was reminded that I used to be extremely tense before each management meeting while I was a Human Resources (HR) manager. I ensured that I was extremely well prepared for each meeting, remained alert and made sure that I was heard. However, I refrained from sharing these recollections with the mentors. Looking back, avoiding sharing those memories with the mentors may well have been related to the way I perceived I should behave as a 'professional' consultant. I had assumed that my professional stance was based on maintaining a distance from my consultees. I had understood that detachment helps with objective inquiry and promotes better understanding of the occurrences within the group. With hindsight, my choice of maintaining a distance from the mentors at this stage, indicates my struggle with deciding whether I was to become part of the group or whether I should remain a part of them.

The discussion continued with other examples being raised regarding their ability to influence company policy, their expectations for promotion and their disappointments, about language constructing reality (e.g., 'maternity leave', 'maternal position/job'). The conversation was uninhibited, without anger or complaints, but descriptive of their personal experiences of being female managers within the organisational context.

Looking back, I was satisfied with the open and candid discussions that evolved in the group from the first meeting. I was pleased and overwhelmed by their great optimism and enthusiasm for being partners in the development of this process. At the same time, I was cautious and restrained from promoting discussions about gender issues, which were raised by the mentors. Their experiences echoed my memories of being the only woman manager at the male managerial table, fighting to voice my opinions. The situation reminded me of my own inner struggles to be heard and to be influential despite being a minority in terms of gender and professional discipline. These were memories of struggles that I had suppressed

and had not discussed in the past. I also avoided sharing them with the mentors, remaining loyal to my perceived professional discipline of being detached and uninvolved. From time to time I moved back and forth, being there with the mentors and then for a few seconds going back into the past, into my own private memories. These gender issues became more intense, emotionally, as the programme progressed and especially during the last mentoring training session.

Mentoring Programme – Concluding Session

The goals of the final training session were to prepare the mentors for adjourning the mentoring process with their groups and in parallel, to end the mentorship training process. I thought it was important to note the time-frame so that the participants would relate to the imminent conclusion of our work as a group, to allow themselves to raise new topics, or to summarise their experiences.

Sharona shared that her mentees were having difficulty in defining future personal development objectives in concrete terms. Shiri asked whether their problem was in defining personal development objectives or in daring to state what they really wanted. At the same time, they also commented that some of the mentees struggled with practical issues, such as how to approach their bosses and initiate a conversation regarding flexible working hours or to ask for permission to work partly from home. At this point, the meeting became highly emotional, as it developed into a heated discussion about the organisational barriers that impact upon internal career management, especially with regard to the promotion of women. Marina told the group that she was currently competing for a senior managerial role in the company. She said that at the end of the interview, she received feedback that she 'was too nice and gentle and not assertive enough'. She was asked whether she would be able to cope in a conflictual, political environment with 'lions' and 'foxes'.

Marina's story evoked anger, resentment and distress within the group. They brought up specific cases that reflected their ongoing frustration with the company's practices. From among various examples, they mentioned that in a recent round of promotions in the company, mainly men had been promoted, despite there having been excellent female

candidates from within the company. They also stated that there were salary gaps between men and women holding similar management positions. These comments served as a catalyst for raising dissatisfaction with other organisational issues, in particular among the young women who found it difficult to seek approval, as formally requested, from their direct managers before applying for a job opening. This situation forced the mentees to negotiate their wishes to realise their ambitions with their managers. Shiri notified the group that one of her mentees had decided to resign from the company and take a new job in another organisation. Her mentee realised, after attending the mentorship programme, that if she wants to be promoted to a more senior position, she would have to do that in a different company.

I was very surprised at the intensity of the anger and frustration expressed at this stage by the mentors, wondering where these painful feelings and allocations of blame had been during all the mentorship sessions. It was almost the final moments of the meeting and I experienced a sense of regret, missed potential and a lack of fulfilment. I was about to leave the mentors in a few short minutes and the group would be adjourned without identifying solutions or discussing further ideas for continuing the work they had started. I felt that I had failed in my attempts to empower them.

[A Few Weeks Later...](#)

A month after concluding the mentoring programme, we met with the mentees' direct managers (the mentees were aware of the meeting) and their HR managers. The meeting was highly charged, emotionally. They reported that the mentees went through a significant emotional experience but that they, the managers, had not been prepared to cope with their subordinates' reactions. One of the direct managers reported that she did not know how to support her subordinate who experienced a crisis after attending this programme. Another manager shared that his subordinate initiated a conversation regarding her promotion in a very assertive and demanding way and that she had considered whether to leave the company. I felt that I was under attack. Struggling internally to be attuned to the managers' feelings and arguments but at the same time experiencing the sense of facing accusations, I even became concerned as to the mentees' wellbeing.

Two months after concluding the programme, a mentor and three mentees resigned from the company. While writing this narrative, I decided to contact Norma, the mentor who had left the company, to learn from her what had led to her resignation. I had been surprised at Norma's decision to leave the company. She had been deeply involved in the mentoring sessions. I had interpreted her involvement as expressing her strong commitment to improving women's status within the company. Her resignation put me in a conflictual situation between my loyalty to the mentors' interests (i.e., to support them in pursuing their desires to change the company's practices regarding women and gender inequality) and my loyalty to the management's interests, as I perceived them (i.e., to retain talented managers and to help facilitate an agreement between contradicting needs).

At the very beginning of the meeting Norma announced with a smile, 'I left because of you'. While the programme had been a significant process for her, it had also drawn her attention to the fact that the glass ceiling is even lower than she had previously thought. She realised that female managers were taken for granted, assuming that they would not leave the company as, in addition to the careers they are pursuing, they are also mothers and therefore in a need of stability. In answer to my question as to why these issues had not been brought up in the earlier group sessions, and had only arisen during the last meeting, she replied that it had taken time for the picture to come together. She added that her previous belief that if she was good at her job she would succeed, was ruptured during the programme. Her statement echoed my own belief that if I invested my efforts in being professional and an expert in my discipline, I would succeed regardless of my gender. I parted from her, feeling weighed down with a great sense of grief, frustration and helplessness, emotions that I will inquire into further.

Initial Reflections on the Narrative

Looking back, the consultancy work with the mentors left me with mixed feelings: on the one hand, I felt a great enthusiasm and an immense interest in being engaged in this programme, on the other hand, I felt disappointed, with serious doubts regarding the programme's implications.

Initially I had been ambivalent as to whether to agree to work on this programme. Throughout my years as a Human Resources (HR) manager and as an organisational consultant, I had not been in favour of running training programmes exclusively for females. I thought that such programmes would position them as belonging to a 'therapeutic group', as if they were in need of special support. I thought that development programmes relating to professional identity should be undertaken in real life settings, within mixed gender groups. Moreover, in the past, I participated in a few 'women only' programmes and on these occasions, I found that the discourse was either helpless and passive or that it tended towards an aggressive and militant atmosphere. Both patterns did not appeal to me and for a long time I avoided participating in such activities. Along my career path, I believed that my professional expertise would pave my way to professional success, recognition and career promotions, regardless of gender. At this period of time, when I received more requests to facilitate such female leadership programmes, I had become more aware of and open to the need for creating a space for discussing gender dilemmas.

I accepted the offer to design and lead this developmental programme even though I had those doubts. This specific programme put a strong emphasis on mentorship. My experience has led me to believe that mentorship provided by experienced executives has a strong value in supporting young managers during transitions and everyday challenges. In addition, this programme was a result of an internal initiative and was not imposed by the management. This aspect resonated with me since it reflected a sincere desire to contribute to others, which I strongly value. I believed that the unique mentoring process, conducted within a group setting, would encourage the exploration of diverse perspectives. In addition, I hoped that it would serve as a 'hall of mirrors' (Foulkes 1964) and encourage self-reflection in a broader context.

As the mentoring process continued, I was enchanted by the mentors' passion and by their enthusiasm for inquiring openly into their own experiences and feelings, to share their insights and dilemmas. My emotional involvement in the process and identification with the mentors caught me by surprise and left me unprepared at the concluding meeting. I was astonished by the tremendous anger and frustration that had built up in them. I was even more surprised by the resignations of one of the mentors and three of the mentees

immediately after the conclusion of the programme. In hindsight, I apparently had not noticed signs of resentment, anger or frustration before the end of the programme. It is possible that those signals had been concealed within the group discussions. Still, it raises questions as to whether I was too involved in facilitating the assigned 'task'.

In retrospect, the group discussions were eye openers for the mentors, prompting them to face the organisational reality regarding gender inequality. Being exposed to their own experiences of discrimination and to those of the mentees, generated a strong decline in the mentors' desire to empower the young female managers. As an external organisational consultant, working for the company for more than a decade, I was astonished to be exposed to the mentors' feelings of discrimination, which strongly contrasted with the image I had developed of the company's position on gender balance. I had previously perceived the company as being oriented towards the promotion of women and gender equality.

This process of disillusionment regarding how gender balance has been managed, confronted me with my competing loyalties. On the one hand, I felt as though I was a kind of catalyst, reflecting and magnifying the gaps between the formal organisational declarations and the actual gender practices in the company. On the other hand, I had to maintain my loyalty to the senior management. This meant not violating my 'unwritten agreement' with the management of supporting the managers' development whilst remaining within the organisational constraints. In retrospect, I feel today that my commitment to the management and the OD director, weakened my ability to voice a more critical viewpoint of the management's practices.

Encountering the mentors' frustration at the end of the programme and being confronted with the mentees' direct managers, challenged my self-perception as being a mediator between conflicting points of view. In this programme, I felt that I had not only failed to mediate, but perhaps I had also 'fanned the flames'. This position was highly problematic for me. It meant that I was faced with the notion that I had become part of a socio-political struggle within which the process evoked self-questioning regarding my role as an organisational consultant dealing with conflicting interests between the mentors and the

management. This dual commitment situated me in a position within which I found myself refraining from voicing a critical stance regarding the management's practices and, therefore, avoided taking an active role in supporting the female-managers (mentors) in standing up for what I believe.

Retrospectively, while writing this narrative, I asked myself about the magnitude and intensity of the emotions that were evoked among the mentors and in me as their facilitator. Had the meetings and the discourse both amongst the mentors themselves and with their mentees painted a picture of gender inequality in the company in starker colours than the reality? Had the perceived image revealing the disparity between the organisation's declared gender balance policy and the actual practices, started to impact the mentors' trust in the management? Would confrontation on gender inequality in the company undermine the mentors' feelings of loyalty towards the organisation? I also questioned whether the mentors' expectations had been that Nina and I would take the organisational issues further, to the management of the company. Had I disappointed the participants by not taking a more proactive role in suggesting how to address these issues? My animating research question at this point is this: *what do I do as a consultant when I experience such competing loyalties, commitments and expectations and why?*

Patterns of Gender in Organisations

The mentoring programme was essentially aimed at empowering women. The mentors aspired towards empowering the junior females during their transitions into their first managerial roles. My goals, as the programme's facilitator, were to support the senior female managers in exercising the mentorship role and to encourage them to reflect on their own managerial roles, focusing on gender aspects.

The issue of gender had never been a focal point of my attention as an HR manager and organisational consultant. I had always been vigilant, looking for cases of gender discrimination in compensation, promotions or working conditions and have made great efforts to prevent such instances. My perceptions were recently challenged when I was invited to design and teach a vocational seminar for MA students transforming from their

academic studies to the workplace. The students who enrolled in the seminar were young women in their mid-twenties. I was surprised by the fact that even though they were still single, they were already limiting their scope of vocational opportunities due to the potential work-life conflict they might encounter down the line. I was quite astonished by how early in the game, gender starts to play a role in moulding our professional choices, before it becomes a concrete conflict that one actually confronts.

Gender issues also became more significant to me when my two daughters entered the job market. They drew my attention to gender-oriented remarks they received while being interviewed. In their job interviews, they were asked direct or indirect questions such as 'What are your family plans?' (Meaning, how many children are you planning to have and when?); 'How flexible are you with regard to work hours?' (Meaning, what are your work hours limits as a mother?). The questions they were asked influenced my decision to take on the mentoring programme and to deepen my inquiry into gender research at the workplace and to explore my ambivalence towards dealing with gender issues.

A yearly global survey, conducted by McKinsey (2018), drawing on data from 279 companies, reveals that women, and in particular, women of colour, remain underrepresented at every level in the corporate pipeline (for every 100 men promoted to managerial roles, only 79 women are promoted; *ibid*, p. 4). Women are less likely to be hired for manager-level jobs, and they are far less likely to be promoted to them. Being 'the only one', especially at senior-level, is still a common experience that women reported. 'They often become a stand-in for all women— their individual successes or failures become a litmus test for what all women are capable of doing. With everyone's eyes on them, women 'Onlys' can be heavily scrutinized and held to higher performance standards' (*ibid*, p. 11). This gendered picture in organisations has been supported also by Israeli data analysis (Cohen & Haberfeld, 2003) but these surveys do not provide an explanation of the continued gender disparities.

Various approaches attempt to explain gender inequality in the workplace. The prevailing paradigm is that the socialisation processes which women and men go through affect the roles they take in the workplace (Bock, 2002). Based on this perspective, both men and

women learn what is appropriate behaviour for their own gender and for the other gender. Thus, when entering organisations, men and women are already equipped with attitudes and perceptions relating to the expected gender roles. Simone de Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex* (1989) claims that, 'One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman' (p. 289). Thus, the differences between men and women cannot be attributed to biological or physiological differences between the genders, but rather to social and cultural processes.

While this approach is described in a stereotypical and generalised manner and people are portrayed in a passive way, the conversation in the mentors group illustrated this view. During the mentoring group sessions, some of the mentors mentioned their mothers' expectations of them assuming 'female' roles that would enable them to manage their home duties. Those expectations, as opposed to their own professional ambitions, have been experienced by them as an ongoing conflict between their multiple roles (i.e. motherhood, professional) and their contradicting demands. This discourse echoed my own deliberations, as a young woman, about the career directions I had been considering. My teachers tried to point me towards studying medicine, but I thought that this may be too demanding a career to combine with motherhood. I had no doubts about developing a career. My mother had been my role model of a woman who worked outside of the home her entire life. But the question for me was what career to choose. With hindsight, I assume that my choice of adopting the advisory supportive role had been taken, either consciously or unconsciously, in the context of gender considerations.

A different approach is presented by Kanter (1977, 2008) with regard to gender inequality in corporations, yet still with a dichotomous, generalised view. Based on thorough research, she claims that organisational structures are designed in the image of the working man and that these create unequal opportunities for women who try to 'fit in' into these organisational models. Kanter argues that organisational inequality is not a result of women's pre-organisational attributes or 'sex differences', but rather that disadvantage and exclusion are inherent in the masculine structure of the organisations. For example, being placed at a higher position in the organisational hierarchy forms certain behaviours. Since most men are positioned in the higher ranks, the configured behaviour at these levels is characterised as male behaviour (i.e., risk taking, task orientation). Therefore, Kanter

emphasises, the power structure in organisations and the differences in opportunities are the main factors that form the different perceptions men and women have with regard to their roles. Kanter also notes, without specifying any particular sector or nation, the insignificant number of women in senior positions. This reduced incidence of females in senior management positions, perpetuates the gender inequality and strengthens the vicious circle. Senior female managers become 'tokens', in Kanter's terms. They are forced to be outstanding and successful in their performance, while at the same time not threatening the majority group (males). They have to blur their differences and at the same time to keep their uniqueness.

Being a minority at the top management level, as Kanter claims, pushed the mentors to search for additional arenas within which to explore their identities and discuss the conflicts they were experiencing in their roles. The mentor group served as a space where they could freely share, reflect and express their thoughts, concerns and emotions. It was less safe to do this in the formal arena. The programme allowed for openness and intimacy for the mentors. At the same time, it led the mentors to look at the 'real world', the actual working place, with more sensitive lenses, thereby discerning gender discrimination.

As the mentoring programme proceeded, the mentors reported that they expected the mentees to represent the mentees' voices and needs (i.e., flexible working hours, gendered salary disparity) at the top management level. Those expectations were perceived by the mentors as the mentees' acknowledgment of their success in being promoted, and becoming part of the company's senior management and a wish that they would promote gender equality in the company. Representing the female interests in the organisation, according to Kanter, is commonly expected of senior female managers.

Looking back, the way I had chosen to cope with the tension between my role as an HR director, and being the only female member of a male dominated management team, was not to propose gender issues as a topic for discussion. I chose to bring up only extreme cases of discrimination (such as wage gaps, discrimination in hiring or dismissing staff and sexual harassment). This had not been a conscious decision and had not been made for ideological reasons. With hindsight, it is possible that the choice represented my need to

blur or diminish loyalty conflicts between my female identity and my managerial role, and I possibly justified this choice by promoting social-organisational activities which I felt, I was better placed to promote (such as the advancement of academic and professional studies within the organisation, forming group discussions among people working in different disciplines or at different rank levels). This preference not to promote or legitimise direct action on gender issues may have represented how fragile the ethos of gender equality really was.

Kanter, in her attempt to answer the question regarding how gender inequality in organisations is formed and conceived, presents her arguments in a generalised, mono-directional and linear way: the different positions of men and women in the organisational structure and the roles that they have assumed, developed the behaviours, which as a consequence, are perceived as feminine and masculine typical behaviours. She ignores the habits people have prior to their entering the workplace.

Acker (1990), like Kanter, does not explain gender inequality in organisations with regard to the 'natural' gender differences between individuals. She extends Kanter's view and claims that gender is embodied in the organisational structures and processes. 'Gender stands for the pervasive ordering of human activities, practices and social structures in terms of differentiations between women and men' (Acker 1992, p. 567). She argues that the major social institutions, as well as working organisations, were formed and controlled by men, perceived from masculine points of view, and were defined by the absence of women. In Acker's terms, organisations are 'gendered institutions'. She elaborates her argument (Acker, 1990) and argues that gendering occurs in interaction of organisational processes: (a) the construction of labour divisions along the lines of gender (i.e. men are almost always in the highest positions of the organisational power); (b) the construction of symbols and images that express and reinforce gender divisions (i.e., language expressions, masculine metaphors which are identified with a 'successful organisation'); (c) patterns of male dominance in interaction (i.e. gender differences in turn taking or setting the topic of discussion); (d) intrapersonal processes (assumptions and ways of thinking according to gendered imperatives).

The mentors discussed experiences that illuminated the underlying assumptions of expected appropriate behaviours from managers at the senior organisational level. These are behaviours which are stereotypically masculine in their manners (i.e., decisiveness, confident, goal oriented). Marina, one of the mentors, shared that in an interview for a senior managerial role, she had been asked whether she would be able to cope with political and conflictual situations since she displayed gentle, 'soft' gestures. Orlin, another mentor, told the group that in a meeting with her direct manager, he commented provocatively that he did not understand her choice to invest in the 'women's project', instead of promoting a business activity, which would advance her visibility within the company.

The above-mentioned theories attempt to identify factors that shaped the gender patterns in organisations. The commonality between these approaches is an attempt to identify a major factor that explains or possibly creates these gender differences. The underlying assumption of these paradigms is that there is a linear, cause-effect relationship. Acker, like Kanter, categorised gender aspects of the organisation in a dichotomous manner, going as far as presenting women as victims of male dominance in the workplace. I agree with Acker that organisations are never gender neutral. I had initially found it difficult to accept this generalised approach. However, as I continue to explore my experiences while writing this narrative on deeper levels, I have begun to realise the extent to which organisations are gender orientated, even today with the rhetorical discourse on gender that exists, but Acker's analysis is incomplete. Sullivan (2000), based on Dewey's social theory, proposes a different point of view. She argues that 'gender is not some external, accidental characteristic overlaying the (allegedly) internal, essential, non-gendered core of ourselves. Rather, it is one of the ways in and through which we arrange (and are arranged as) the selves that we are' (ibid, p. 26). Based on Dewey's notion that 'we are our habits' (ibid, p.26), she claims that our individual habits have been formed under the unique cultural conditions that we were exposed to. Those cultural customs (i.e., habits at the level of society or culture) precede the personal habits, and therefore guide, but also restrict our gendered view. 'Through our bodily habits, we incorporate our culture's gender (and other) constructs. The constructs that prevail within the culture(s) in which I am anchored, will inform the habits that I develop - that is, the person that I become' (ibid, p.28). As a woman,

she argues, she knows effortlessly, 'without thinking', how to be a woman because of the bodily habits that she is. Those habits are seen in our gestures which are part of our behaviour.

According to Sullivan, Dewey would ask not how we free ourselves of gender perceptions, but how we might fruitfully restructure the cultural constructs that shape the habits that we have. She suggests, based on Dewey's pragmatist view, that 'we must be open to the continual reconfiguration of our habits and the configurations of gender, sex, and sexuality that structure our existence, and we must work to increase the friction that encourages such transformation. Only by doing so can we free ourselves of the rigidity and stagnation of the self and world that accompany gender binarism' (ibid, p. 39).

Based on Sullivan's idea of being open to the ongoing reconfiguration of our habits, several conceptual and pragmatic issues are relevant to be considered in relation to gender discourse within the organisation. One question that may be asked with regard to the composition of the group is this: Is forming a group composed only of women (i.e., mentors and mentees) an adequate forum to discuss gender issues in the organisation? This did create a safe space and enabling realm within the mentors and the mentees' groups in which they could openly discuss their concerns and feelings. However, a 'women's only' group, might decrease the friction and possibly limit the development of a meaningful discussion within the organisation. It might even perpetuate and preserve the binary perception of 'us' vs. 'them', females vs. males, within the mentors and mentees' groups. It may even deepen the perceived disparity between women and men and/or between upper and lower management groups.

Reflecting back on my role as a female-facilitator, I realise that I was enmeshed in the inclusive-exclusive split view. It was natural for me, as Sullivan stated, to identify, 'without thinking', with the mentors' binary conversation, without being aware of it at that time. In a way, I may even have limited the potential 'friction' between the mentors, who faced the actual company's gender practices and the management who represent the company's gender policy. While I was involved in this project, I worked within the defined scope of the mentoring programme, mainly with the mentors, not proactively offering an extended

discourse with other relevant stakeholders. Even the meeting with the mentees' direct managers was designed to update them with regard to the mentees' experiences and to hand over responsibility to them. It had not been planned to open a discussion of the topic. The direct managers' responses were perceived by me as blame and criticism, and not as an opportunity to open a sincere discussion regarding organisational gender habits and practices.

The mentoring programme exposed the gap between the declared policy and the actual company practice regarding gender equality – in Argyris and Schön (1974) terms: a gap between the 'Espoused theory' and the 'Theories-in-use'. I found this conceptual frame helpful in describing the emotions and the trust crisis that evolved among the mentors as they faced the reality of their organisation.

'Espoused Theory' vs. 'Theories-in-Use'

Argyris and Schön (1978) distinguished between two contrasting theories of action: those theories that are implicit in what we do as practitioners and managers, and those which we speak of when describing our actions to others. The former can be described as '*theories-in-use*'. They are demonstrated in our practices and tend to be tacit knowledge. The words we use to convey what we do or what we would like others to think we do, can then be called '*espoused theory*'. A person may or may not be aware of the incompatibility of the two theories. Argyris (1980) argues that effectiveness results from developing congruence between 'theory-in-use' and 'espoused theory'. Argyris and Schön's differentiation helps in distinguishing between the organisational declarations and their actual practices, thus identifying the gaps between the two. However, its weakness lies in assuming rational descriptions by the organisational members on what is really happening in the organisation and a confidence that closing the gaps would ensure organisational effectiveness.

As described in the narrative, there was an open and public discourse in the organisation on the policy of diversity in management and especially on promoting women to higher professional and managerial positions. This policy is manifested in written channels (i.e. the company's formal website) and in various company meetings and conferences. The company has a reputation, internally and beyond its premises, as an organisation which

invests many resources in promoting gender equality programmes and practices. In practice, the '*theories-in-use*' in Argyris and Schön's terms, are incongruent with the '*espoused theory*'. In the local, everyday events, the mentors and the mentees experienced a different reality. They encountered belittling comments and responses (such as 'when you talk and smile you are perceived as being less competent' or 'you are not assertive enough to cope with the foxes and wild lions') and became aware of salary gaps in comparison to their male colleagues. Experiencing the disparity between the '*espoused theory*' and the '*theories-in-use*' breached the trust between the mentors and the management. This mistrust was expressed intensely in the final mentors' training meeting. Having worked with the company for more than a decade, like the mentors, I too was astonished to discover the extent of the disparity between the official gender balance policy and the mentors' experiences in practice.

According to Argyris and Schön (1978), when individual members of the organisation experience a mismatch of an outcome to a certain expectation or an incongruity between goals and values and the actual results, this 'frequently serves as agents of changes in organisational theory-in-use' (Ibid, p. 18). Accordingly, the members of the organisation tend to modify their images, maps and activities in order to create alignment between expectations and outcomes. Argyris and Schön suggest two responses to this mismatch: '*single and/or double-loop learning*'. '*Single-loop learning*' means that people learn from the consequences of the action to improve or correct the next action, without each time examining the undermining assumptions that are being used to design the action. In contrast, '*double-loop learning*' drives people not only to adjust actions in the light of their consequences, but also to question the conscious and unconscious 'mental models' being used to design those actions. 'Mental models', according to Argyris and Schön, are private representations and images of the theory-in-use that each member of the organisation has of the whole and 'jointly construct while using and inquiring the organisational theory-in-use' (ibid, p. 24). Inquiring into those shared 'mental models' may arouse fear and conflict. Fear of failing to produce an alternative solution to what has been revealed as dysfunctional or embarrassing themselves and others as incompetent of coping with those profound questions.

Based on Argyris and Schön's perspective, the original idea of the senior female managers to implement a mentoring programme might be described in terms of '*single-loop learning*'. Their original aim was mainly to 'repair' the situation and to equip the young managers with tools and best practices for coping with challenging managerial situations. (i.e., how to voice their opinions more strongly at the male dominated management table or how to negotiate their compensation plan more effectively). Being part of the mentorship programme had created an opportunity for the senior managers to openly, individually and collectively, self-question and make sense of their career choices. I invited mentors to enter into self-inquiry into what and who had shaped their identities, who they had become, and to identify and discuss dilemmas regarding their managerial work. As the discussions proceeded, their assumptions and values were revealed and discussed. They started to share more profoundly conflicting desires and expectations (such as being a mother and having a career; having a constant need to prove that they are good professionally at what they are doing). In addition, organisational practices and norms began to be openly discussed among the mentors. Episodes of workplace discrimination were shared and enriched the picture. In Argyris and Schön's terms, a '*double-loop learning*' process, which is a self and shared inquiry, might evoke emotions such as fear, anger and frustration. Similar emotions were expressed within the mentors' group.

Argyris and Schön's conceptual frame was helpful for me, in this case and in other previous organisational interventions, in distinguishing between the social patterns within the organisation: rhetoric declarations versus the actual practices, for example. It was also conducive to understanding the gradual communicative change within the mentors' group. The patterns of communication changed from being descriptive to becoming more reflective, a change which evoked emotional responses as anger, shame and frustration, as predicted in Argyris and Schön's single and double loop learning concept. However, the weakness of their model is that it ignores the existence of power relations within the organisation, which usually prevent such an open dialogue. Argyris disregards the tendency of 'people in organisations to collude in keeping matters undiscussable because they fear the consequences if they do not' (Stacy & Mowles, 2016, p. 111).

James Scott, a political scientist and anthropologist, presents a different approach to the concept of '*theories-in-use*'. He takes power relations into consideration and distinguishes between people's behaviour in the presence or absence of the powerful dominant group. This aspect is relevant to better understanding the difficulty the female managers had experienced within the male-dominated work setting. In his book *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (1990), Scott differentiated between 'public' and 'hidden' transcripts in human interactions in unequal power relations.

Sharing Hidden Transcripts

According to Scott, public transcripts are 'the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate' (1990, p. 2), and they manifest the onstage discourses and practices. The hidden transcripts are the 'discourse that takes place offstage, beyond direct observation of those in power. The hidden transcript is thus derivative in the sense that it consists of those offstage speeches, gestures and practices that confirm, contradict or inflect what appears in the public transcript' (ibid, p. 4). As the powerless leave the dangerous realm of onstage they drop thick masks to safely express their thoughts and feelings to families, friends, and colleagues. Those stories that are told behind the scenes serve as a counter-ideas from the dominant one and a form of resistance.

In the narrative, the discussions among the mentors, in an 'offstage' setting, empowered them to raise the 'hidden transcripts' and share cases where they felt deprived (e.g. the realisation that not one female manager had been promoted in a recent organisational promotion round, or a refusal to consider working flexible hours and settings to meet the women's requests to balance work-home obligations). Within the small groups it felt safe to discuss those 'hidden transcripts', which exposed the difficulty to talk about it publicly. As more discussion cycles were enacted, they revealed the current patterns of domination in the company and increased the mentors' awareness of the disparity between the 'public transcripts' and the actual power relations.

Scott focuses on the choices taken by the dominated group in keeping their resistance hidden from those they feel are trying to dominate them. He distinguishes between the different expression of public and hidden discussions among the subordinate groups in the

presence or absence of the dominant group. He argues that the frontier between 'public' and 'hidden transcripts' is not a solid wall, but a zone of constant struggle between different groups (1990, p.14), between the dominant and the subordinate. Within the mentors' group, there was an ongoing debate as to what to bring to the management table discussions and when. Thus, it was discussed whether it was appropriate to raise what were seen as 'human' issues (i.e., employees' feelings and concerns) as compared to 'task' oriented issues (i.e., meeting the defined goals or budget constraints) or even whether to make a public confrontation regarding their dissatisfaction with the way gender is practically treated within their units.

Stacey and Mowles (2016) make a slightly different distinction between Scott's 'public' and 'hidden' conversations, using the terms of 'legitimate' and 'shadow' themes emerging in ongoing conversations. They claim that 'organisations are patterns of relationships between people and these relationships impose powerful constraints on what is permissible to say, to whom and how, if one is to be included rather than excluded' (ibid, p. 422). Legitimate themes organise what people feel free and safe to talk about within the boundaries of what is perceived by them as acceptable and adequately normative. Shadow themes organise what people would allow themselves to discuss only informally, in very small groups which they trust and feel safe in. Legitimate conversational themes are appropriate from the management viewpoint, since they conform to the official ideologies which support the existing power relations. They, like Scott, emphasise the patterns of conversations within the realm of power relations, casting light on the patterns the dominant group uses to preserve their dominancy.

In the described narrative, the official ideology and policy of the company was declared as striving for gender equality. This ideology is well known within and outside the company. The numerically small representation of female-executives within the top management (only one woman out of nine executives who functioned as VP Human Resources) has rarely been discussed publicly. It was seen as legitimate to talk about and initiate various programmes aiming to promote awareness of gender equality, with the mentoring programme being an example of such an initiative. It was deemed less appropriate to talk, openly and freely in public, as in the mentors' discussions, as to why there are so few female

executives in senior positions. Such conversations had only been held in small, mainly exclusively female, groups where there was a high level of trust and they felt safe. Within the mentors' group, it was legitimate to talk and share cases of gender discrimination. As the trust strengthened, the mentors shared their emotions openly and intensely bringing up cases where men had been promoted to higher managerial ranks, while women were rejected. Those private open discussions reflected the 'shadow themes' that organise the experience of the mentors being together.

According to Stacey and Mowles, both the official and the unofficial ideologies are sustaining power relations in a complex interplay between them (ibid, p. 423). Being exposed to Scott's 'hidden transcripts' frame and Stacey and Mowles' 'legitimate' and 'shadow' themes, I started self-questioning my avoidance of initiating discussions on gender inequality 'onstage', while exercising my managerial and consultancy roles. I have also been questioning whether my strong involvement and attachment with the mentors hindered my ability to challenge the organisational discourse on what were seen as inappropriate and illegitimate themes. I will proceed with my inquiry into those questions in the following section.

My Role as an Organisational Consultant

Looking back on the role I assumed in the mentoring programme, I can identify some of my professional perspectives that guided me and have continued to guide me in other organisational interventions, as an organisational consultant. Writing the narrative, and even more the reflective inquiry, raises questions and doubts within me. While accepting the role, I saw myself as responsible for designing the learning process, combining new content (for example, the unique meaning of being a mentor or the dynamic aspects of group mentoring) and leading the programme in practice. I assumed that our mutual learning experience and openness to inquiring into our ways of thinking would have a profound value for the mentors who were about to implement these skills in their mentoring groups. Before reflecting on my consultancy process in the described narrative, I will introduce the theoretical background that guides my work as a consultant.

My theoretical background is drawn from the organisational consultancy discipline which is mainly based on 'system dynamics' theory (being presented in scholars' works such as Argyris, 1982; Shein, 1999 and Senge, 1990). The common assumptions about this theory are that the organisation can be thought of as a whole or be described as a system composed of interdependent sub-systems. The organisation is understood as a self-regulating system, which acts to reach an equilibrium state and greater adjustment with its environment. The organisational consultant's role, according to this approach, is to diagnose gaps between the current organisational functioning as compared with the ideal desired future of the organisation, as designed by its managers. Based on this analysis of the gap, the consultant is expected to help the managers design appropriate organisational interventions to close the gaps and enhance organisational effectiveness.

During my academic studies in organisational psychology, and later during various professional training and educational endeavours, I was directed to work from the perspective of a detached observer, to collect valid data, using scientific methodologies and propose relevant solutions (Burke, 2018). Through my group facilitation studies, I was guided to create a distance between myself as the facilitator and the participants, a space that would enable working on conscious and unconscious feelings. These guiding principles helped me to position myself as an expert who has a unique 'toolbox' and to differentiate myself from other disciplines.

As I accumulated more professional experience as a consultant, the objective observer position was challenged and I found myself intentionally and unintentionally involved, emotionally and personally in various situations. The mentoring programme was an example of my high level of involvement and identification with the female managers, which I will return to reflect upon later. Joining the DMan programme has encouraged me to take my everyday experiences seriously. I have been exposed to the complex responsive process perspective (Stacey and Mowles, 2016), which explores emergence, paradox and complexity as they arise in social processes and has challenged my way of thinking as an organisational consultant. It has encouraged me to inquire into and further question the ways I think as a consultant and how this has been manifested in my practice. In this analysis I will focus mainly on two consulting aspects which puzzled me in the narrative –

the first is a common preoccupation of complex responsive processes scholars and the second is my own research question:

1. Involvement – detachment in the consultancy process – *How does my involvement or detachment state impact the consulting process I am involved with?*
2. Loyalty – *to whom and to what am I loyal in my consultancy work? How do I manage conflicting loyalties in my work?*

The Dilemmas of Involvement – Detachment in my Consultancy Work

Mowles in his book, *Rethinking Management* (2011) claims that while the consultant joins the organisation, even temporarily, he or she becomes involved in and contributes to the patterning and interweaving of intentions emerging constantly within the organisation. Consultants are actively engaged in organisational political life and they are co-participants in the ongoing discussion in organisations. They potentially bring in additional value by encouraging the organisational staff to gain greater detachment than typically found in their habitual behaviour.

Looking back on my experience as the facilitator of the mentoring programme, I was neither objective nor an observer, but rather a ‘co-contributor’ to the discourse. During the mentoring training sessions, I became more involved with and attached to the participants. I was intrigued by the mentors’ motivation to take part in this reflective journey: sharing their personal experiences relating to their struggles to be heard in a male-dominated realm and challenging themselves by exploring their own beliefs and assumptions. I found myself identifying with some of the mentors’ dilemmas, such as work-home balance, an immense will to succeed and influence in a male managerial setting. Retrospectively, I was torn between my desire to become one of them and my conflicting inner ‘professional’ imperative to be detached and less involved. While being engaged in the discussions regarding gender, career, self-identity and employment issues, I entered into the domain of organisational politics and became part of the power struggles. I was puzzled as to whether my strong involvement would blur my ability to read, identify and interpret what was taking place in the group.

Norbert Elias, a German sociologist, in his book *Involvement and detachment* (1956) distinguishes between 'involvement' and 'detachment' participation. 'Involvement', in his view, refers to the inevitable emotional participation that occurs while performing our tasks when interacting with others. 'Detachment' refers to less emotional, more aware and reflective participation. 'Normally adult behaviour lies on a scale somewhere between these two extremes', within the involvement – detachment continuum and 'it may shift hither and thither as social and mental pressures rise and fall' (Elias, 1956, p. 226). Elias clarifies that neither form of participation is either involvement or detachment, but it is always a paradox of involved – detachment or detached-involvement simultaneously, where the emphasis will shift from one pole to the other. They both exist at the same time, intertwined and independent (Stacey & Mowles, 2016, p.348).

Elias claims that 'in order to understand the functioning of human groups one needs to know, as it were, from the inside how human beings experience their own and other groups, and one cannot know without active participation and involvement' (Elias, 1956, p.237). Being part of society and becoming more dependent on each other, people have developed the ability to take a 'detour via detachment', which Elias describes as our capability to reflect on different courses of activities and to evaluate their potential implications on others. Consequently, we might exercise self-restraint. According to Mowles, this ability to take a 'detour via detachment' does not mean being an objective observer of the social game, we are involved in with others, but rather becoming more detached and therefore more aware of how we are playing the game with others (Mowles, 2011, p.43).

In contrast to the widespread notion (Schein, 1987) that the consultant's role is to be an objective observer and diagnostician, Mowles (2011), drawing on Elias' work, claims that 'what happens in organisations is due to the interweaving of intentions of many different people who work in them including for a temporary period, the consultant' (p.252). Thus, there will inevitably be an attempt to engage the consultant in the ideological view of those working in the organisation. Furthermore, Mowles argues that the ability of the consultant to be detached while at the same time remaining involved, enables him/her to draw

attention to what is happening in the organisation and to what assumptions are being taken for granted and, as a consequence, to encourage adopting a more reflexive view.

As a facilitator, reflecting on my own involvement-detachment participation, I can describe it as a movement along this continuum. I embraced the mentors' passion and enthusiasm at the beginning of the development process and my attachment to them became more intense as the relationship developed and tightened. In retrospect, it might be that this intense involvement prevented me from provoking critical questions, as for example, regarding their idealised expectations (i.e., changing the organisational discourse and practice regarding gender).

Furthermore, during the last session of the mentoring programme, in which feelings of anger and blame toward the management were intensified, I felt attached to their emotional state, and identified with their feelings. Despite my attempt to call the mentors for reflection (i.e. a perspective with greater detachment) on their thoughts and feelings, this process provoked further emotional frustration and anger. I realised that the programme was about to conclude our consulting and collegial relationship and that they would be left with their dilemmas and challenges without having the support of the group and from me. I considered that they were leaving the programme even less empowered, as compared to the beginning stage, and less motivated to drive any change. My strong attachment to the mentors overshadowed my ability to see how the programme had empowered some of them to explore new career paths (i.e., leaving the company for a new job). A point of view that my research colleagues on the DMan drew my attention to.

In retrospect, I can identify my subtle shifts between two positions: my involvement and my willingness to be part of the group on the one hand, and following my habits, based on my professional socialisation, to act from an objective observer perspective, on the other. I was rarely aware of my movements back and forth along this continuum. Retrospectively, I realise that my attempts to be solely objective were futile and impossible. According to Mowles (2011), 'The consultant becomes part of the power relationships they are trying to affect...' and 'There will inevitably be a struggle... to engage them in the ideological world view of those working in the organisation' (p. 253). As my involvement with the mentors'

emotional discussions increased, I became more aware of gender as a socio-political power struggle within the workplace setting. I even found myself agreeing with the mentors' critical approach. At the same time, my high level of attachment and identification with the mentors while concurrently being involved with the management in different consulting projects, confronted me with a dilemma of loyalty which I will explore in the next section.

Being loyal – to Whom and to What?

Loyalty is an expression of affiliation with or membership in a diverse set of relationships such as family, friends, sports, politics, religion, ethnicity, class, locality, professional and interest groups, organisations and nations (Kleinig, 2017). It is a disposition to persist in a perceived valued relationship with which we have developed a form of social identification. In his book *The sociology of loyalty*, Connor (2007) attempted to explain the social processes that underline the meaning of loyalty in the Western society. He explored and concluded that loyalty is an emotion which reflects attachment to something or someone the individual cares about. There is a debate among scholars about whether loyalty is an emotional, rational or practical characteristic (Kleinig, 2017), which I perceived as an artificial division.

Connor, who based his argument on the idea that loyalty is an emotion, characterised loyalty by several unique traits such as: attachment to the other (a person, group, institution or an idea), longevity (not often changing), a reciprocity (mutual expectations), a socialised process (learning what an appropriate target for loyalty is), contextual and contingent (on a place, time, event or people) and negotiable through social contacts. According to Connor, loyalty is a key to forming our identity primarily because it is constructed through and by an individual's interactions within his/her social world (ibid, p.5). Belonging to other people and institutions illustrates for the individuals their identity, role in an interaction and possible actions (ibid, p. 132). Being part of a group, a corporate or an idealised 'whole', evokes a sense of enlarged personality, assuming that through this belonging, they can accomplish their own desires (Stacey and Mowles, 2016, p. 390). At the same time being loyal to one group often means antagonising another group.

Elias and Scotson (1994) explored how a sense of 'we-ness' is often defined in opposition to another group. In their research on a working-class community, they noted a sharp distinction between two groups who lived in the same neighbourhood: the old-established group and the newer group of residents, the 'outsiders'. Elias and Scotson explored how a sense of 'we-ness' is developed. The 'established group' had lived in this neighbourhood for several generations and created a degree of group cohesion and a collective identification that the newcomers lacked. They had developed norms and values, an ideology, that gave them a strong sense of belonging and superiority over the 'outsiders'. They built a 'we' identity that emerged and was strengthened, as opposed to the other group, 'the outsiders'. According to Elias and Scotson, the key function of any ideology is to create binary oppositions which lead to 'us' versus 'them' perceptions. Dalal (2012), drawing on Elias, claims that belonging is a basic need of human being 'intrinsic to the idea of belonging is negation to someone or something' (ibid, p.90).

The concept of loyalty was not communicated explicitly within the mentor group's discussions. They did not know each other before the group's formation. As the relationships among them became closer during the programme, a collective 'sisterhood' emerged. A sense of 'we-ness', mutual caring and loyalty was intensified further when the programme ended. The mentors created for themselves a networking group, in which they have communicated their successes or failures in promoting their gender equality agenda (e.g., updating open positions, sharing relevant articles and the status of their mentees). Being committed to the idea of gender balance in the company and their loyalty to each other challenged the mentor's loyalties to other groups they were engaged with (e.g., the management).

Multiple Competing Loyalties

Connor claimed that the individual is engaged with multiple types of loyalties, which he defined as 'layered loyalties' (ibid, p. 130). Those layers span from 'micro to macro sociological interactions', from a local social site (such as family) to a wider framework (such as a nation). Being involved in multiple types of loyalties, inevitably results in a conflict since those loyalties confront the individual with potentially competing demands.

Based on Connor's concept of 'layered loyalties', I can identify my multiple loyalties towards the OD manager, the mentors and the management. I was contracted to design and lead the mentoring programme by Nina, the global OD manager of the company. We have worked together previously on various development projects. She opened the gate to the organisation for me, serving as an intermediary between the management requirements and expectations and the intervention programmes that I have been involved with. Having worked together for over a decade, we have developed a close, trusting relationship between colleagues who mutually respect each other. I felt strongly committed to sharing with her my observations and obliged to represent her voice on occasions when she did not participate in the group meetings. In retrospect, I did not initiate questions regarding the management's involvement. I also did not propose ways for drawing the management's attention to the gaps between the declared equality gender policy and the actual experiences. It is possible that this close attachment blurred my inclination to raise those pointed questions, derived from a need to protect our ongoing relationship. In hindsight, it might be that I experienced an unconscious fear that Nina would raise these issues by herself with the top management and it would hurt my consulting relationship with them.

The mentors were my primary targeted consultees with whom I worked directly. As the relationship between the mentors and I became closer, my engagement intensified. I felt highly committed to their success as mentors and had a strong desire to create a safe and empowering learning setting for them. As in other executive development programmes, my main focus and attention were on the consultees themselves, even though the interventional programme occurred within the particular organisational context. Throughout the programme, I invited the mentors to engage in self and organisational reflection, which by their very nature inherently evoked critical comments towards the organisational practices and the management. This put my loyalty both to the mentors, who are my focus group, and to the management who had engaged my services, to the test.

Looking back, even though I was not aware of it at the time, the management had a significant influence on me throughout the consultancy process, including while I listened to the mentors' complaints. I have worked with the company's management in other instances. The management was not an abstract entity for me. On the contrary, they were

real people with whom I have engaged on multiple occasions. In this project, they took the backstage of my attention, as I did not negotiate directly with them on the scope and purposes of the programme (having contact only through the OD manager). While listening to the severe criticism directed toward the management, I felt distressed. I was engaged with the management members discussing the policy of gender equality and recognised their sincere intentions. The cases and examples that were brought by the mentors damaged those perceptions. I felt a need to 'protect' them and to present their voice, but at the same time to direct my attention to the mentors' voices and feelings. I was experiencing a conflict between supporting the current management's intentions versus awakening feelings that challenge the status quo.

I was deeply upset when I heard about the resignation of the mentor and the three mentees, and was unable to explain to myself why I reacted like this. I could not see, at that time, the advantage for those who had decided to leave the company and had started on new stages of their career. I did not articulate it to myself then, but with hindsight, I wonder whether I perceived these resignations as disloyalty or even as a betrayal by those who decided to leave the company. While looking back at my inner struggle with my competing loyalties and my interpretation of the mentor's resignation, I became aware of the way I have perceived loyalty as a binary state: loyal versus disloyal (or betrayal). I understood my loyalty to the mentors, as opposed to my disloyalty to the management. With hindsight, I realise that this dichotomous view restricted my ability to observe the inevitable paradoxes entailed within our multiple relationships, and even evoked feelings such as helplessness and anxiety at disappointing the others.

The resignations reverberated through the company, with discussions as to whether the programme had achieved its purposes or had motivated the managers to leave. The departures from the company around the time of the programme's conclusion caught me by surprise, even though I am aware of other such decisions taken by managers at the conclusion of other executive development programmes. Programmes, that by design invite the participants to self-reflection, evoke questions which are not asked in the course of our daily lives. Some of the questions leads to further self-exploration, including whether to stay or leave the organisation. This deliberation is a main theme for Hirschman, a political

economist, in his book *Exit, Voice and Loyalty* (1970). He argues that there are two types of responses to unsatisfactory situations that people experience with regard to organisations, or to their own countries. The first is 'exit' or leaving without trying to repair things. The second is 'voice,' that is, speaking up and trying to remedy the defects. The argument is built on a dichotomy. While exit requires a decision with an 'either/or' format, voice is more complicated and is contingent on past experiences, whether voicing was an effective means. 'The presence of the exit tends to atrophy the development of the art of voice' (Ibid, p.43).

Hirschman claims that loyalty can modify the response, causing one to stand and fight (voice) rather than cut and run (exit). It prevents or postpones leaving the organisation and activates voice. 'Loyalty is a key concept in the battle between exit and voice not only because, as a result of it, members may be locked into their organisations a little longer and thus use voice option with greater determination' (Ibid, p. 82). It raises hope and expectations that improvement might be achieved from within, and serves as an institutional barrier to exit. Exit according to this model reflects disloyalty. The threat to leave may serve as 'bargaining power vis-à-vis the organisation' (Ibid, p. 82) and be perceived as pronounced if it has been expressed by a 'loyalist, who cares, and leaves no stone unturned before resigns himself to the painful decision to withdraw' (Ibid, p. 83).

Hirschman's dichotomous model of exit vs. voice responses to unsatisfactory situations has been criticised by several scholars (e.g., Barry, 1974) who claim that the model does not reflect a wider spectrum of reactions: A person can sustain his loyalty to an organisation or a state, following his exit and yet voice his opinions and criticisms as an outsider. I would add to this criticism that Hirschman's model postulates that a person makes his own decisions only out of rational considerations, without contemplating the accompanying social aspects. Hirschman represents a common way of looking at loyalty, a binary view, as either 'you are with us' or 'you are against us'. The option to leave the company was not discussed by the mentors during the programme's sessions. On the contrary, the meetings were used by them to voice their arguments and feelings. Their commitments to their mentees and their active participation in the meetings can be seen as a manifestation of their loyalty to the subject matter, as well as to the company. I am now more aware of my own binary view of loyalty: as if we are choosing either loyalty (while staying and voicing my

ideas) or betrayal (when leaving and avoiding a continuous struggle). The mentor's decision to leave inevitably indicates a loyalty or disloyalty to the company. Yet, I can agree with Hirschman's argument that loyalty, in cases where high levels of commitment are involved, may prevent resignation, which I also found to be valid for the described narrative.

Summary and Further Inquiry Questions

My narrative describes a process of female empowerment. The gender issue was one of the major themes in the programme, a matter that I had previously avoided dealing with throughout my career. My avoidance was associated with my perception of a rather polarised gender discourse, which emphasised binary perspectives: either a passive and helpless approach or an aggressive and militant one. This reflection helped me to understand how much effort I had invested in positioning myself as a 'skilled professional,' while expecting other women to adopt the same approach. This inquiry shed light on gender as a social political organisational process. This process is a manifestation of an ongoing power relation struggle, in which I, as a consultant, am a player in this game. This resonates with Dewey's approach (1922) who emphasises that the individual's habits are formed under cultural configurations that precede the individual, and at the same time, tend to reproduce themselves through individual habits.

Becoming increasingly engaged throughout the mentoring programme, led me to recognise that I am not an objective observer of the process but rather a part of it, influencing and being influenced by the discussions. Despite my attempts to remain more detached, I was drawn in and became emotionally involved in the mentors' frustration and struggle to promote their gender equality agenda in the company.

My strong involvement confronted me with an inner struggle between competing loyalties (Connor, 2007): my commitment to the mentors versus my loyalty to the management. Experiencing the tension between these conflicting loyalties, highlighted the importance I have attributed to loyalty. The values of loyalty, a sense of belonging and commitment are all values that I absorbed at home while growing up, as described in Project 1. The meaning I gave to these values in the workplace, was translated into a sense of solidarity, care for

others and being a part of a shared mission. Accordingly I had assumed that promoting development programmes, such as this mentoring programme, would have a direct impact on employees' identification and commitment. Being exposed to humanistic psychological theories in my academic studies (e.g., Maslow, 1954; Schein, 1985; Peters and Waterman, 1982 and Collins and Porras, 2002) validated and reinforced these assumptions. The resignation of one of the mentors and three mentees, caught me by surprise. I perceived these actions as being disloyal and as a personal failure to strengthen their affiliation to the organisation. A discussion with my learning colleagues challenged my binary view about loyalty: understanding that this resignation does not necessarily mean being disloyal, but rather, being in tune with and loyal to one's own values that might be shared within a smaller group (in this case of women).

While exploring the unique relationships which emerged with the female mentors and amongst them, I realised how difficult it was for me to voice a critical stance towards the management. It was also difficult for me to encourage them to inquire into their own experiences from a more critical perspective. This struggle was even present while writing and reflecting on this narrative. I found it was uncomfortable for me to voice a critical perspective, as it might express disloyalty towards people I had deep connections with (i.e., the mentors, the management, and the OD manager).

Epilogue: Meeting the Company's Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Six months after the programme ended, I initiated a meeting with the company's CEO and the mentors. Prior this meeting, I had met with the mentors to prepare for the discussion. In this preliminary meeting, the mentors presented a rather positive descriptive picture, diminishing the severity of gender inequality issues that surfaced during the mentorship programme. At this point, I chose to stop the meeting and invited them to reflect upon their patterns of articulating their ideas and in particular their submissive approach.

This meeting took place while I was writing this narrative. I believe that being immersed in the inquiry and the reflection process made me exercise a different intervention approach. In alignment with Elias's concept, I chose to take a 'detour via detachment' (Elias, 1987),

voicing a more reflective approach in my attempt to echo their habitual attitude of complying and avoiding confrontation. Being involved with the mentors' journey, but yet becoming more detached, enabled me to be more aware of the mentors' communicative patterns and to provoke challenging questions.

Furthermore, drawing on Mowles' approach that the consultant may operate as a 'temporary leader' (2009) and take an active part by encouraging the members of staff to conduct thorough discussions, inspired me to initiate the meeting with the CEO and the mentors. At the same time, it calls for a further reflexive exploration of my own practice as a consultant. Mowles argues that 'a better developed sense of self enables consultants paradoxically, a fuller exchange with the other' (ibid, 2009, p. 292).

In my third project, I will continue exploring the concept of loyalty in the workplace with regards to the process of self-identity formation and further to inquire into the concept with a critical view

Project 3: Caught Up in a Power Struggle

Introduction

In my second project, I explored the concepts of loyalty and attachment in a mentorship programme for senior women executives, that aimed to empower junior females during their transitions into their first managerial roles. The analysis of the narrative described in project 2 made me aware that loyalty is viewed and portrayed by me (and others) as a positive virtue and is associated with shared interests and commitment. I also realised that by being part of different groups, we experience multiple loyalties which inevitably gives rise to a conflict of competing demands and expectations. This conflict forces us to face questions regarding our loyalties: *To whom are we loyal? What guides our loyalty? How do we negotiate our multiple competing loyalties? Does being loyal to someone or something mean being disloyal or betrayal to an 'other'? Is an 'other' required to define our loyalty?*

In my third project, I intend to continue inquiring into the concept of loyalty during an organisational transition process in which feelings of uncertainty emerged among the involved parties - managers, employees and myself as a consultant. A power struggle erupted during this time between the management and the employees.

Narrative

Background

David, the new CEO of the Centre for Science and Technology Education (CSTE), approached me to facilitate a management team development process. In our initial meeting, he introduced himself and described the Centre's main activities. He portrayed the CSTE's main goal of bringing science closer to every individual in Israel and developing the future generation of Israeli leaders in the sciences. The Centre was established 25 years ago and is part of a globally renowned academic institution, which partly subsidises the Centre's activities.

In our meeting, David mentioned that in addition to himself, there were three other new members of the management who had recently joined the Centre (out of a total of nine team members). He added that due to the new composition of the team, and since the

management team had not met in the past to reflect upon their working practices, he would like to allocate time for a team development process. He claimed that the management team development activity would be an initial phase in a process that would lead later to a review of the Centre's vision, its main focus of work, and its organisational structure. David explained that in recent years, the Centre had expanded its scope of activities and targeted new audiences. As a result, questions arose among some of the management members and himself regarding the focus of the Centre's programming: What is the Centre's main mission? What are the core competencies? What is its unique added value as compared to other similar institutions and to the formal educational system? In addition, due to difficulties in finding new sources of funding, the Board was applying pressure to increase efficiency and was pushing the management to review the Centre's activities. At the end of our meeting David asked me to facilitate the management development process and then to accompany the organisational review process.

In the meetings with David, I heard about his passion for bringing a 'new spirit' to the Centre, or as he put it: 'to become a beacon of science education in Israel'. A vision which he said he communicated to the Centre's employees in his initial interactions with them. I also learnt in those preliminary meetings about a few steps that had already been implemented, signalling his intentions: a limited number of educational programmes were shut down which led to several employees' being laid off; a business development Vice President (VP) was recruited to incorporate a more profitable model into the Centre's activities; and a new organisational unit was established which aimed to promote new initiatives.

Later, when I met the other management members individually, they described the concerns and rumours that had started to spread in the corridors regarding additional downsizing, some of which had reached a few of the management members. The employees perceived the new CEO's initiatives as challenging the *status quo*. It could be that some of these concerns were also felt among the management members, but they did not share them directly with me.

I was involved in different consulting processes in the Centre, such as facilitating a management team development activity, supporting a few task force teams examining the Centre's current activities and facilitating the management meeting which aimed to outline the future organisational plan. This narrative focuses mainly on the latter.

Planning an Organisational Change – Interrupted by a Betrayal

The off-site management meeting was opened by David, who presented the meeting's goal. He emphasised that the discussions would be based on the recommendations of the employees' task teams that some of the management members had been drawing up in the past year. He reminded those present that the employees had been informed that their reports would be an important input during the management discussions while planning the future structure of the Centre and the focus of its activities. He also noted that the thorough reports of those task teams showed the need for restructuring the Centre, and for creating processes and mechanisms to achieve a greater level of integration and synergy between the units.

Less than an hour after the beginning of the management meeting, the mobile phones started buzzing. The management members' attention abruptly shifted to the incoming messages which informed them that at the Centre's offices, a few employees were going from one office to the next, convincing their colleagues to join the labour union. Those employees, in their efforts at persuasion, expressed the critical need to unionise at this point due to the insecure employment circumstances they foresaw, if the planned organisational change would be implemented. They tried to persuade those who were hesitant about this move. The management members were shocked. They furiously tried to understand who was responsible for these actions. Whenever a manager received a text message on his/her phone, they read it out to the others present. Their tone of voice expressed the immense anger and insult they felt. 'It is a coup d'état', said Joe, one of the management members and he went on to ask what the employees were trying to tell them. A turbulent discussion started in the room. The management members tried to understand what the employees were trying to communicate to them: Were the employees protesting against the undermining of the current *status quo*, or were they trying to make it

abundantly clear to the management that they also have the power to impose new rules of the game, at a time when the management was discussing a future organisational change?

David abruptly cut short the discussion and said in an authoritarian voice that the employees' unionising step would not decide the meeting's timetable, and asked to continue with the planned agenda. I disagreed with his instruction and suggested that we should devote time to reflect on what had just happened in the organisation; I asked: 'What were the employees trying to say by these actions and how does this make you feel'? David responded decisively, without pausing, that we had already wasted time and were behind schedule. He insisted we move forward to discuss the rationale behind the organisational change, based on the draft that had been prepared. The group members were quiet. I felt he was wrong in doing so, yet I accepted his authority. David read from pre-written slides, and an argument flared up within the group: no one could finish a sentence and people were interrupting one another. The conversation became extremely discordant; I felt as if I was in the middle of a storm.

I asked the group to stop the discussion and insisted that it was important to reflect on what was going on in the room. The group fell silent. This was in sharp contrast to the shouting just minutes earlier. Naomi, a management team member, said she felt they were experiencing an earthquake and was not sure if this was the right time to initiate any changes. She claimed that there were real issues at hand of employee distrust and there was a need to make sense of what had just happened at the Centre. She even thought it was best to end the off-site meeting and return to the offices immediately. Jonathan, another team member, supported her, stating that these actions were a 'wakeup call' for him and the team to re-examine whether the organisational change was even necessary. Another round of loud comments started again. No one listened. No one could finish a sentence.

I felt overwhelmed. I was as surprised as the management members by the employees' initiative and identified with the managers' resentment. I was also trying to understand what was happening in the meeting, puzzled as to whether the mutual shouting was an expression of underlying conflicts and distrust among the management members. I asked

myself whether the meeting was falling apart and why I was not able to help the management team move on. I tried once more to intervene in the turbulent debate and again asked how they understood what was going in the room. I raised the question of whether there was also a trust issue in the management team itself.

The commotion stopped and the room fell silent. Joe said that he felt uncomfortable to talk in the group. Each time he tried to convey a thought, someone interrupted him. He complained that this was a common pattern in their weekly meetings, but was more intense this particular morning. Sandi said she felt guilty when she heard that employees from her unit turned out to be the leaders of this unionising initiative. She added that she felt a strong sense of betrayal. David said gently that he appreciated the openness, assured them that the unionising would be handled when they returned to the Centre's offices, including hiring a labour affairs legal consultant. He added that all future plans would be coordinated with the entire management team, including the messages to be put over to the employees. Yet he urged the group to revert back to discussing the change plan. He asked me to lead the discussion and to take responsibility to ensure that everyone took turns in the conversation. I willingly accepted the task to regain a sense of control. I actively provided opportunities for each participant to voice his or her opinion and invited people to talk in turns. I then summarised the ideas expressed. I felt at that point that the discussion was 'managed' and even found myself elated by this 'designated managerial position', as if things again were under my control. The group cooperated with this mode of operation and we continued to work according to the agenda. I could breathe again and hoped that while progress in designing the change programme was being made, the group would be able to discuss and reflect on their feelings about the employees' unionising initiative.

At the break, David told me that he himself had experienced emotional turmoil and was extremely concerned about what had happened in the organisation. He thought that at this point it would be more efficient if I, as an external expert, would continue leading the discussion according to the planned agenda. I took the role and the discussions continued. In the evening, while driving home I found myself thinking about whether my attempts to structure the discussions and control the events were the right course of action to have taken. Whether my compliance with the CEO's request was a way of relieving his anxiety, or

a practice I adopted in order to wrestle back control over the process, especially in tense situations. I was worried that my facilitation approach had blocked out the opportunity to have a sincere and open discourse on the conflict at hand. I was distressed and questioned my role in this crisis situation.

Initial Reflections on the Narrative

The narrative describes a crisis of trust between management and employees in the context of organisational changes which a new CEO initiated when he joined the organisation. The narrative focuses mainly on an event in which a group of employees initiated a unionising process in the organisation, trying to convince their peers to join the labour union. This occurred while the management team was absent from the Centre's offices in an off-site meeting, discussing and designing an organisational change. The employees' unionising initiative, the timing and the manner evoked mixed feelings among the management members: they were all surprised when they received the text messages and did not know about the employees' intention to initiate a unionisation process. Some of the managers expressed disappointment and anger towards the employees who chose to initiate the process, without first discussing it with the management, and while the management were out of the offices. One of the managers labelled the initiative as 'a coup d'état' and another manager called it a betrayal. Some of them experienced it as a crisis of trust and interpreted the employees' action as an expression of resistance to the planned organisational change (yet this plan had not even been properly defined), and as an attempt to signal to the management that the power did not lie solely in their hands. The act of recruiting employees to join the labour union was perceived by the managers as a means of gaining power in the struggle.

I was surprised by the intensity of my anger and feelings of resentment that engulfed me while hearing about the employees' initiative to unionise, even though I was fully aware that this was their legitimate right. I identified with the management's sense of frustration that the employees had embarked on this initiative without any prior discussion or consultation. The employees' action reinforced my negative feelings about the aggressive manner that I perceived the labour unions to be operating in Israel. While reflecting on this

narrative, I now realised that I am strongly biased against the unions, based on previous experiences. Thus, I decided to explore my past to gain a better understanding of my own position about unions.

Those feelings reminded me of my personal difficulty when working as an HR manager in unionised companies. Back then, I perceived those unionised groups within the organisation to be a barrier between the management and the employees. As an HR manager, I believed that my role was to be the mediator between the management and the employees: speaking at the management forum, I voiced the employees' interests and I felt that I protected their employment rights. While talking with employees, on different occasions, I tried to listen carefully to their needs, but at the same time, to represent the management's intentions. My wish to be a mediator was not always perceived in this way by the management. Conversely, on different occasions the employees accused me of being the mouthpiece of the management and not faithfully representing their needs to the management. I was trying to be mediator. However, based on my experience, I perceived the unions to be an interfering factor within management – employees' relationships.

In the following section, I will describe the historical background of labour unions in Israel, as a context for further exploration into why the employees' move to start a process of unionising evoked such feelings of anger and resentment among the management members and in me. I will adopt Elias's approach to inquiring into social phenomena (or society) with a sense of history (2001, p.47). He claims that in order to better understand the unique flow of social life, we must adopt the perspective of both the 'airman' (a view of historical changes and the way we form and are formed by them) as well as of the 'swimmer' (a view of the particular circumstances in which we find ourselves acting). The historical point of view, the 'airman' perspective, can serve as a 'detour of detachment' (in Elias' terms, 1987, p.6) in reflecting on my (and others) emotions and reactions towards the employees' unionising course.

Labour Unions in Israel - an Historical Background

From its founding in the 1920s, the Israeli industrial relations system was extremely centralised, and characterised by a high level of unionisation, as well as intense government involvement through legislation, bargaining, and political influence (Harpaz, 2006; Haberfeld, 1995). The major labour union in Israel, the General Federation of Labour (GFL), was founded before the State of Israel was established and played a major role in the development of the State, with responsibility for generating much of the nation's infrastructure and economy. As a monopolist trade union, the GFL offered workers and their families health services in its own hospitals and clinics, vocational and higher education in its school system and college, social activities for youngsters in its youth movement, daycare facilities for children, a daily newspaper and more.

Since the GFL was established and aimed to take care of all the aspects of the employee's life, it not only operated on an economic basis, but also on an ideological basis as noted by Harpaz (2006) that 'nation building was among its foremost goals' (p. 2). At the beginning of the 1980s, approximately 80% of the labour force in Israel were members of the Federation or one of its affiliates. Its members came from all sectors of the economy and all classes of society. Moreover, the membership represented the entire spectrum of Israeli political ideologies (Harpaz, 2006, p.2). The Federation was closely aligned with the ruling Labour political party. Since it was such a dominant player in the country's economic scene, even people who did not share the Labour party's political views felt obliged to join the Federation.

Several social, political, and economic transformations took place in Israel, from the mid-1980s, which were detrimental to the status of the labour unions (Mundlak, Saporta, Haberfeld and Cohen, 2013): the replacement of the succession of Labour-oriented socialist governments by a coalition of parties, which emphasised a more liberal ideology and supported a free market economy; an accelerated process of globalisation (including production that moved abroad); intense legislation which ensured social benefits to all (e.g., Health Insurance Law); and an immense resentment felt by a generation of Israelis born in the 1960s and 1970s who perceived the GFL as 'an archaic bureaucracy, a dinosaur which at

best may hamper their individual achievements and goals' (Harpaz, 2006 p.8). According to the latest official data from 2018, 27% of all employees in the Israeli economy are members of the various trade unions (Israel Centre of Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

Despite my recognition of the value of the labour unions within the working environment, nevertheless I have never been a member of any union and I have developed a negative perception about them. I found that over time, the general image I created of union leaders was one of people who put their own interests above those of their members, and who perceived the unions as a stepping stone to further their political careers. Although this is a generalised opinion, as an HR manager I found myself avoiding having to deal with unions.

Since my view of the unions' way of operation in Israel is so negative, my learning set colleagues and supervisors encouraged me to explore the multiple points of view of people who are involved with labour union relations, aiming to challenge and broaden my view on unions. This was not a survey in its traditional form, but rather an attempt to enrich my understanding about diverse positions on unions. I chose to discuss these issues with a labour court judge, a labour relations lawyer, a HR manager, a labour union representative and an academic researcher. They all emphasised and agreed upon the legitimate right of employees to be unionised. However, they disagreed with each other regarding the need and value of labour unions within the working environment. Whereas the HR manager perceived her role to be the representative of the employees' needs and rights when dealing with the management, the labour union representative believed that it is the union's responsibility to safeguard the employees' rights. HR managers are perceived by the union representative as the management's agents, or as more oriented to the management's agenda and less to the employees' interests. The labour court judge and labour relations lawyer stressed the importance of the labour unions' role in representing the employees' rights and in maintaining 'checks and balances' between those who have more power (e.g., the management) and those who have less power.

Following these conversations, I became aware that my one-dimensional view of the labour unions' activity had prevented me from inviting the management members to explore their feelings about the potential involvement of the union in the Centre. I also realised that my

attitudes to unions were partly shaped by a fear of the conflictual relationship that I perceived as an inevitable outcome of the unions' involvement in the workplace. This was also a concern that some of the management members had brought up in the off-site management meeting. The negative attitudes of the Centre's managers towards the labour union are well supported by research in Israel, indicating a clear preference of the employers to be responsible for the employees' rights and to reduce the unions' involvement in their organisations (Haberfeld, Cohen, Mundlak and Saporta, 2006).

Experiencing Uncertainty

Reflecting on the narrative, I have become more aware of the feelings of uncertainty and anxiety that all the parties were experiencing in the year since the CEO had joined the Centre. Some of the employees and the managers experienced uncertainty regarding the unknown future changes that were discussed publicly (e.g., within the task groups) and in a closed forum (e.g., within the management meetings). Moreover, some were worried about how the future organisational changes would impact their roles and their reporting lines.

Uncertainties are part of our everyday lives. Peter Marris, a British sociologist, claims that since uncertainty arises from not knowing enough to predict what will happen, we search for more information in an attempt to prepare ourselves for the unknown future consequences (Marris, 1996). We evaluate our power to influence the course of the events by making decisions or choosing our actions when we are not even sure whether these will be beneficial or not (ibid, p. 9). Building on Bowlby's attachment theory, Marris argues that the experiences of uncertainty can undermine a person's trust in his or her attachments i.e. in those relationships which provide a sense of security, reliability and faithfulness, attachments which give individuals a basic framework for meaning and relatedness (ibid, p. 45).

In the narrative, all the sides: the employees, the management and the CEO, found different ways of expressing and coping with their feelings of uncertainty. Some of the employees had volunteered to participate in the task groups, which had taken place prior to the described off-site management meeting. As the participating employees

had been told, the task groups aimed to examine the Centre's current activities and evaluate what needed to be preserved and what needed to be changed. This involvement enabled them to present their positions, to strengthen their informal networking, to gain some information and, at the same time, allowed them to feel some sense of control over the unknown results of the changes under discussion. It is also possible that the discussions intensified those feelings of uncertainty, as the employees realised that management was serious in its intentions of pursuing a change. The efforts to unionise could also be interpreted as a response by some of the employees to try to reduce their sense of uncertainty by relying on the experience of the union agency that was perceived as having the legitimate power to manage such complex working situations. In retrospect, what the management members viewed as an act of betrayal by the employees, can also be viewed as a way of the employees' coping with uncertainty.

The managers may also feel uncertainty regarding the scope of their responsibilities as the discussions about the Centre's restructuring proceeded, yet those feelings were not expressed or explicitly discussed. At the off-site management, most of the management members experienced the unionising act as an uprising: taking an abrupt, one-sided action without allowing any opportunity to discuss the issues at hand. David's preferred coping style during the off-site meeting was to create a united stance and establish a shared plan of action to deal with the employees' steps: hiring a special legal consultant to advise and deciding on joint communication messages. An action plan that can be viewed as a parallel unionising act. Most of the management members accepted this course of action. Only one management member voiced a different position, expressing sympathy with the employees' step. However, his opinion did not resonate well with his colleagues. The management's need to feel they were a unified group may be seen as a defensive reaction in a power struggle; a struggle which reinforced the 'them' versus 'us' division. The managers' call for unity can be seen also as a means of signalling loyalty towards David and the other management colleagues.

I was hired as an experienced organisational consultant, yet at those moments in the off-site management meeting, I felt far from being an expert. The sense was that the entire change process was falling apart. Moreover, I was concerned that I had failed to fulfil the

CEO's expectations. My chosen approach was to go along with the CEO's request to lead the discussion in a structured and well-ordered manner. In retrospect, my willingness to comply may have been a means of dealing with my own anxiety and fear of failure. At the same time, it was an attempt to reassure the CEO and relieve his concerns. Retrospectively, I wonder whether my cooperation with the CEO's need prevented a meaningful reflection process regarding the relationships among the management members, as well as between management and employees. In addition, it may have given the CEO an excuse to avoid dealing with his own anxiety and managerial responsibility, as well as with the anxiety of the management members. The conversations with people who are involved with labour union relations helped me to become aware of my tendency to take the management's side in diverse organisational occasions.

Taking Sides in a Power Struggle – A Question of Loyalty

During the off-site management meeting, I experienced the unionisation declaration as a hostile approach taken by the employees to express their resistance to the potential organisational change, as well as to the management members. I felt immense anger and resentment towards the employees, in particular to the way they chose to implement the unionisation. At the same time, I also experienced a strong sense of identification with the management. I took the management's side fully and became a part of the 'us' versus 'them' dynamics.

My strong identification with and loyalty to my client (the management), is a recurring theme that emerged while writing Project 2. I realised in my previous reflective analysis, that by being loyal to a specific party (the female mentors, in the Project 2 narrative), I inevitably tend to alienate the other side (the management). The difficulty that I experienced in Project 2 was that I felt loyal to both sides. On the one hand, I was working on behalf of my consultee, the management, in facilitating the mentorship programme, yet on the other hand, I also identified with the mentors. I felt myself struggling between competing loyalties.

The Project 3 narrative has made me more aware of my inclination to adopt the managerial perspective and of being highly committed and loyal to the management. It has evoked self-questioning regarding this tendency: Why have I, in my role as an organisational consultant, preferred to adopt the managerial perspective? What are the implications of coming out in favour of one side? This realisation even made me feel uncomfortable about my need to be on the side of the power holders, as opposed to my self-perception of being more of a mediator in performing my role.

When reflecting from a more 'detached involvement' perspective, to use Elias' term, (1987, pp. lxxviii–lxxxii), I realised that my professional experiences as an HR manager and consultant, working mainly for management teams or individual managers, may have made me more attentive to the managerial points of view and rhetoric. Being detached involved, as Elias suggests, means that as human beings we engage emotionally with the world along a continuum of detachment and involvement. We are both involved and detached at the same time in some amalgam of the two, depending on the context. We can never be completely involved nor completely detached (ibid; Mowles, 2011, p. 85).

In retrospect, I assume that identifying with the managerial point of view has strengthened my own sense of having the power to make an impact on others and potentially may reinforce long-term consulting relationships. At the same time, I was not aware of the 'price' I was having to pay that involved giving up my freedom to challenge other peoples' positions. Reflecting on the narrative showed me that my choice of identifying with the management tunnelled my perception and led me to label the employees' actions as being unfaithful and disloyal. I felt angry at the employees and was insulted by their actions and this hindered my ability to take a more detached stand. This compromised my ability to encourage the management members to be more attentive to the employees' position and seek alternative perspectives. In my chosen approach during the off-site management meeting, I may have reinforced a uniform approach (viewing the union as an interfering barrier) that had emerged and had contributed to the 'us' versus 'them' dynamics. I became a part of the 'we', the dominant group, in which loyalty may have served as a means of strengthening the 'we-ness'. Taking the management's side made me experience conflicting loyalties: conflict between being loyal to the management versus disloyal to the employees.

It encouraged me to further reflect on my own tendency to hold a 'pro' management perspective and a less 'detached involvement' approach, in Elias' terms. These experiences give rise to the following questions:

Why and when does the pressure to express loyalty to one group sometimes turn into an expression of disloyalty towards others? What are the implications of being loyal to and identifying with the management side in the consulting process?

I will examine these questions further, beginning with an exploration of the change efforts that the management intended to implement as the context within which the power struggle had erupted between the management and the employees and created a 'us' – 'them' rift, a split in which I found myself part of the management's side.

An Organisation in Transition: Tension Between Change and Maintaining Stability

The ongoing rapid changes in the turbulent environments in which organisations function today, require executives to continually understand the patterns of change in their respective environments and to react accordingly (Burke, 2018, pp. 1-2). This creates demands on managers to demonstrate that they are capable of leading change and innovation in organisations that will guarantee a competitive advantage (Todnem, 2005). Thus, in this uncertain reality, managers are expected to re-examine the existing organisational order (e.g., organisational structure, working processes) and design, implement and supervise the necessary transformational changes, despite the fact that the future is unknown (Mowles, 2015, pp. 99-106). The consistent expectation for incoming CEOs, who are under enormous pressure, is to show that they are doing something in their first 100 days (Watkins, 2003).

Since David assumed his role, he communicated to different forums, directly and indirectly, about the need to promote changes in the Centre. The management team building process that he initiated was the first stage of the organisational transition that he planned. David, who was recruited to the role of CEO from outside the organisation, saw the need for

change as vital, and tried to persuade the management team of this need. From the time he took up his position, he had made a few decisions (such as shutting down a limited number of educational programmes, which led to several employees being laid-off) that evoked feelings of uncertainty among the employees. Rumours regarding additional changes and downsizing had started to spread among the employees.

The concerns and anxiety among the employees were due to the uncertainty regarding the implications of the change for the nature of the Centre and for their personal circumstances: Would the transformation change the Centre's ideology 'to bring science education to everyone in Israel'? Would the Centre become an organisation driven by financial viability considerations? Or which programmes would be shut down and which positions would become redundant? Would reporting lines be changed and employees be forced to report to different managers?

Organisational behaviour studies which focus on recipients' reactions to organisational changes tend to portray and classify the variety of responses that those changes evoke (Oreg, Vakola, and Armenakis, 2011, 2007; Klarner, Todnem, and Diefenbach, 2011; Prasad and Prasad, 2000). Oreg, Vakola, and Armenakis (2011), in a comprehensive review of sixty years of quantitative studies about recipients' reactions to organisational change, propose a model which classifies recipients' explicit reactions into three main dimensions. First, affective responses (e.g., anger, anxiety, worry, stress and guilt); secondly, cognitive reactions (e.g., reframing the change's rationale, reevaluating the necessity of the change); and thirdly, behavioural responses (e.g., information seeking, participating in the activities of the intervention, remaining or leaving the organisation). Klarner, Todnem, and Diefenbach (2011), who focus mainly on employees' emotions during change, propose that, as opposed to a dichotomic division of positive emotions (e.g., excitement, trust) versus negative emotions (e.g., fear, insecurity) to organisational changes, the emotions may be viewed as processes that evolve and change during and across those changes (p. 332). These studies that describe the multiple responses of people to transformational situations, emphasise the individual's perspective. This research approach ignores the social context and complexity in which organisational changes occur and that 'change, and resistance to change are intimately tied up with relations of power' (Mowles 2015, p. 103).

Acceptance or rejection of the organisational change can be described as agreement or disagreement of people with the proposed, or already implemented, changes. It can be also viewed as a manifestation of a struggle between those who want to maintain the existing state of affairs and those who desire to renew and challenge the *status quo*. Innovation and change are the polar opposites of continuing the current mode of operation, which is repetitive and routine. At the same time, 'Continuity and change are in paradoxical and dynamical relationship, which implies that neither of them is a static state' (Mowles, 2015, p. 103). The reactions of the employees and the managers towards the planned changes represented the polarity between the inclination to adopt the idea of the need for change, as opposed to the tendency to preserve the existing state. The tension between the drive to change and the motivation to maintain stability existed in both groups. However, in public, a different picture was seen. The management members were perceived-by the-employees-as those who strive to lead the change. The employees were perceived by the management as those who struggled to maintain the status quo. The split between the two groups reflected a power struggle which I will expand on in the following section.

'Us' versus 'Them' as an Expression of Dynamic Power Relations

While the management discussions on the future organisational changes continued, some of the employees felt uncertainty and threatened regarding their future employment. A group of employees initiated a unionising process which was primarily aimed at protecting their employment conditions. At the same time, it pitted them against the management. Yet, when the management were informed about the employees' initiative, they felt betrayed by the employees. They perceived the act of unionising, as the employees' resistance and as a potential interfering obstacle. The terms of the struggle between the two groups - the employees' group versus the management group - were set out, despite diverse voices existing within each group regarding the organisational processes.

The power struggle between the management and the employees exposed the emerging split between them. Management scholars (e.g., Duncan 1979; Anand and Daft, 2007; Galbraith, 1974) distinguish between the leading group (those holding power) and the group

being led (the employees) by delineating the official organisational structure. However, in many cases, they do not look for a broader understanding of power struggles. The sociological research approach (e.g., Gulati and Purana, 2009; Diefenbach and Sillince, 2011) suggests that the distinction between these two hierarchical groups, and other unofficial hierarchies (e.g., gender based), are also formed through informal and covert processes. In his research, Scott (1990), an American political scientist and anthropologist, identified different behaviours of subordinate groups in the presence or absence of the dominant group (as discussed in project 2). Although he was writing about farmers rather than people in organisations, the patterns he wrote about might be relevant to all human interactions. He argues that the public occurrences (i.e. the open interactions between subordinates and those who dominate) are unlikely to tell the whole story about power relations. As the powerless leave the dangerous realm of 'onstage', they drop their 'thick masks' (ibid, p. 12) to safely express their thoughts and feelings (in Scott's terms, 'hidden transcripts'). These off-stage conversations serve as a counter-ideology to the dominant group.

The CEO's declaration about potential changes in the Centre with regards to its mission and structure, caused a process which provoked feelings of uncertainty and rumours about future lay-offs. The rumours were the 'offstage' discussions and 'hidden transcripts' in Scott's terms, which were hidden from the management, as they were surprised when they heard about the employees' unionising step. The management members admitted in the off-site management meeting that they had heard a few voices of concern about the potential change, but did not have any clues regarding the employees' intentions. On the other hand, the CEO's broader plans were hidden from the employees. Thus, 'hidden transcripts' also occur within the dominating group. Scott's work is helpful in understanding the power dynamics between the two parties and how the hidden discussions within each group excluded the other, strengthened the 'we-ness' in each group and intensified the gap between them.

Scott claims that in cases in which 'hidden transcripts' may be expressed publicly, this is often considered a breach of etiquette, a form of resistance or even a symbolic declaration of war (ibid, p. 8). When the hidden transcripts become public, the more powerful group

may be caught off guard. In the case of my narrative, the unionising step caught the management off guard and was experienced as a crisis of trust.

Scott's theoretical framework gives me a better understanding of the resistance patterns among the employees when David, the CEO, joined the Centre and initiated organisational changes. During this period, the management team had formed a distinctive unit as a team: three new management members were added, the team had established working routines, periodical management sessions were allocated to reflect upon the ways the team works, and social events were dedicated to enhancing the management team's cohesiveness. It defined the management as a team and distinguished them from their subordinates. When the crisis of trust erupted, it was said and expected that the discussions, arguments and disagreements would remain within the management team's realm. According to Scott, 'for the powerful, as well, there is typically a disparity between the public transcript deployed in the open exercise of power and the hidden transcript expressed safely only offstage. The offstage transcript of elites is, like its counterpart among subordinates... in those gestures and words that inflect, contradict, or confirm what appears in the public transcript' (ibid, p. 10). The management members agreed to keep their discussions or non-consents 'off-stage' and to coordinate their public 'on-stage' communication messages.

In a different context, Elias and Scotson's research (1994) also illustrates the evolving gap and the power dynamic between two distinct groups (longer-established residents versus newcomers) living in the same neighbourhood in England. There were no differences between the two groups in terms of nationality, ethnicity, occupation, income and educational levels. The men worked in the same factories and the children learnt at the same schools. The only difference between them was that one group was composed of older residents, who had established the neighbourhood, and the other was a group of newcomers. The 'established' group, who had a high degree of internal cohesion, formed a sense of superiority over the newcomers and maintained their position through gossip and by excluding the newcomers from positions of influence. Ironically, the 'lesser' status was accepted by the 'outsiders' and preserved the 'us' versus 'them' split. I have referred to this study in my previous projects to elaborate how a sense of 'we-ness' is often formed as opposed to another group.

Similar to the division described by Scott (between the dominant and dominated groups), and in Elias and Scotson's work (between the 'established' and 'newcomers' groups), the rift between the two parties in my narrative (management vs. employees) evolves both because of the need to be affiliated with one group, but also, to some extent, to be distinct from the other group. The rupture between the two groups intensified as the crisis of trust deepened. Each group attempted to build a sense of 'one-ness', despite the absence of full agreement within each group. Some of the employees objected to the unionising initiative, and even among the management some members questioned the necessity of the organisational change. Yet, the explicit and implicit expectations from each group's members were to present a united front and to be loyal to the group's agenda. The evolving sense of 'one-ness' enhanced the interdependency among the members in each group, while attempting to promote their agendas: that of the management to drive the organisational transformation, and that of the employees to protect their employment rights or even to preserve the Centre's way of operation.

Drawing on both the research of Scott and Elias and Scotson, and following the narrative inquiry, the split that appeared between the two groups and the sense of 'one-ness' that was reinforced in each group, sheds light on the question of loyalty among each of the group's members. The concept of loyalty can be understood in terms of mutuality in which the group's members are expected to fulfill the group's expectations and articulate their ideology.

Loyalty, Commitment and Identification

The issue of loyalty emerged in Project 2 during which I experienced multiple competing loyalties towards the mentors, the OD manager and the management team. I was engaged with the three parties and felt that by identifying with one side, I was being disloyal to the other ones. I realised that having loyalty to multiple groups means that I, and other members of the groups, were inevitably faced with a conflict since those loyalties generate competing demands (Connor, 2007). Loyalty, in this sense, is characterised as a relational

process in which a person is attached to and identifies with someone or some others (a person, a group) or with a collective process (principles, causes).

The theme of loyalty in the narrative of Project 3 evolved in the context of a crisis of trust and a power struggle between the management and the employees. In the following section, I will expand on how loyalty is described in the management literature and will focus on the question of whether being loyal inevitably means taking a side and whether loyalty is inherently exclusionary.

[Delineation of the Concept of Loyalty](#)

The concept of employee loyalty has been widely discussed in the management literature, yet remains loosely defined (Kleinig, 2014; Hart and Thompson, 2007). Scholars who explore loyalty (e.g., Kleinig, 2014; Powers, 2000) debate whether loyalty should be viewed as a sentimental attachment (Connor, 2007; Ewin, 1993; Adler and Adler, 1988), an attitude (Hart and Thompson, 2007), a type of behaviour (Coughlan, 2005) or as a combination of these dimensions (Powers, 2000). Employee loyalty 'signifies a person's devotion or sentiment of attachment to a particular object ... it expresses itself in both thought and action and strives for the identification of the interests of the loyal person with those of the object' (Powers, 2000, pp. 4-5). An additional distinction is whether loyalty is an attitude that resides in the mind of the individual (Hart and Thompson 2007, p. 297) or is a personality trait (Coughlan, 2005, p. 49), or is a social process, an interactional relation (Humphrey 2017, P. 402).

Despite considerable scholarly attention given to the concept, loyalty and its dimensions remain, at best, casually defined (Coughlan, 2005). It is also typically discussed in 'either/or' dichotomous terms: either one is loyal or one is disloyal (Fletcher, 1993); loyalty is either a moral duty and a virtue or a dangerous attachment and a vice (Hart and Thompson, 2007). Moreover, the concept of loyalty is closely related to other concepts such as commitment, identification and trust (Mowday, Porter, and Steers 1982; O'Reilly and Chatman 1986; Meyer and Allen 1991). 'Loyalty and commitment occupy much of the same conceptual space' (Hart and Thompson, 2007, p. 299).

Based on my research so far, and drawing on the complex responsive processes perspective (Stacey and Griffin, 2005; Stacey and Mowles, 2016), I would argue that loyalty is a perception we hold or embodied sense we have with regard to our relations with others, which is further based on mutual trust and accountability. Our perception and feeling both influence and are influenced by the sense of belonging to and identification with a person or group of people. Furthermore, our sense of loyalty plays a significant role in forming our relationships and interactions. Being loyal to other(s) can be viewed as a complex relational process in that it enables us to cope with our various challenges and threats, yet it can also inhibit our ability to be critical and see the complexity of the situation. Loyalty is context dependent and fluctuates as the relationships among group members are changing.

In my narrative in this project, the sense of loyalty was developed and reinforced among each group's members as the events unfolded (i.e. recruiting employees to join the labour union, management discussions to further the organisational changes). The loyalty experience was influenced by and influences the sense of belonging to one party and to the identification with its' interests and agenda. The experience of togetherness and the sense of loyalty that developed may have empowered each side in its legitimate struggle, yet it may have masked the ability or willingness to explore the other side's position.

Is Loyalty Inherently Exclusionary?

Efforts to satisfy the group members' expectations raise a question about whether being loyal to someone (or something) is inherently exclusionary. This conflict has been explored by Kleinig (2014) and Fletcher (1993), who both inquire into loyalty from a social and moral perspective. While Fletcher (1993) claims that loyalty is necessarily oppositional or exclusionary: 'A can be loyal to B only if there is a third party C (another lover, an enemy nation, a hostile company) who stands as a potential competitor to B, the object of loyalty' (p.8), Kleinig (2014) argues that loyalty is context dependent. In the narrative, the employee-management crisis highlighted the exclusionary position of one party over the other. While the employees felt as if the management had broken the 'unwritten obligation' of maintaining the Centre's legacy (e.g., not closing down educational programmes and laying off employees), the management felt that the employees had violated the mutual trust and the 'unwritten obligation' to openly discuss their concerns (e.g., involving the

union in the Centre). Loyalty, in this sense, can be portrayed as potentially exclusionary, but it is also context sensitive.

Reflecting on the narrative has made me more aware of my inclination to adopt the managerial perspective and be relatively more committed to the management agenda, in this and in other consulting cases. This realisation made me feel uncomfortable, due to my self-perception of fulfilling the role of a mediator, rather than judge that I was being one-sided. I assumed that aligning with the managerial point of view had strengthened my sense of having the power to make an impact on others. It might also be an expression of my loyalty towards the management who had hired me to consult. However, aligning with the management had tunnelled my perception, labelling the employees' actions as unfaithful and disloyal. My identification with the management members' resentment and feelings of anger hindered my ability to take a detached view. It compromised my ability to encourage the management members to be more attentive to the employees' position and seek alternative perspectives. In my chosen approach in this consultancy, I may have reinforced uniform meanings that had emerged and contributed to the 'us' versus 'them' dynamics. Loyalty may have served a purpose as a means of strengthening the 'we-ness', but at the same time weakened the freedom to voice diverse perspectives.

Following on from the argument regarding loyalty as inherently exclusionary, in his book *On Loyalty and Loyalties* (2014), Kleinig sheds light on additional 'problematic characteristics' of loyalty (p. 5). He claims that the sense of loyalty may generate ambivalent feelings which can be viewed in several dimensions. On the one hand, loyalty provides a sense security and support, yet, on the other hand, it may also evoke uncompromising expectations to be aligned with the collective dominant voice and it diminish the freedom to voice a different opinion or to express criticism. There is also the risk that the 'loyal' individual will accept the group's decisions, avoiding self-responsibility by not exploring whether the decisions are justified or appropriate. In addition, in some cases being loyal blocks one's ability to see the other's perspective, holding on to what feels familiar and thus, creates resistance to renewal and innovation.

Reflecting on the narrative, I am more aware of the moral implications of the group's pressure to be loyal and take a side, as Kleinig argues. As described, in both groups (management and employees) there were diverse attitudes regarding the occurrences in the Centre: In the employees' group, some resisted joining the union and some opposed the way their colleagues chose to lead the unionising initiative. In the management group, one of the members asked to reconsider the significance of the future changes and another member questioned regarding the appropriate timing of those changes. These dissenting voices were not given any prominence. The collective dominant voice in each group blocked the freedom to voice a different, critical approach.

In both groups, there were explicit and implicit expectations to be loyal to the group's position and to take a clear side in the struggle. For my part, taking the management's side put me in a biased position, in which I colluded with the management interests and abandoned the employees' perspective. Taking a side, or the demand for loyalty to the group's agenda, can be seen also as an attempt to prevent changes and maintain the status quo. Loyalty in this view can be perceived as a barrier to novelty and innovation. So, I anticipated that if I had been more sympathetic to the employees' stand, I might have been viewed as anti-change by the CEO and his managers.

Summary and Further Inquiry Questions

Looking back on the narratives I have chosen to include in my research so far, I realise that I viewed loyalty (in projects 1 and 2) as an unqualified moral good, a positive virtue that could help, along with other positive attitudes, to build trust, to attain the common goals and to be able to cope with challenges and threats. By writing about particular cases of my everyday working experience as a consultant, I now understand that I tended to mitigate or ignore the inevitable contradictions and conflicts that we find ourselves facing at work. A more in-depth examination of my working experiences, has given me an understanding about how loyalty is a relational process, more complex than an either/or one-dimensional choice, but one which entails an inevitable conflict of loyalties, which can change over time.

Based on my research to date, I have grouped together several aspects of loyalty to form my main arguments. The first argument is that loyalty is relational rather than a trait, a position or a 'thing'. This is based on Elias's theory (2001) that we as human beings are born into and grow up within a 'human web', a network of interdependencies. Loyalty among people can be viewed as a social process which strengthens or loosens the threads of the social net, as opposed to approaches which portray loyalty as a personality trait, a specifically political allegiance, a moral virtue or a psychological stance (Connor 2007; Humphrey 2017; Kleinig 2017). Loyalty is a relational process in which a person is attached to and identifies with others (a person, a group, a society) or with a collective process (principles, causes, religion). Being attached to diverse objects of loyalty, implies that it is not the object, but rather the kind of relationship (i.e., history, interests, power relations) that we are engaged with (Humphrey 2017, p. 400).

The second argument is that loyalty is an emergent process, not a fixed position. Drawing on Elias and Scotson's research (1994), we learn that groups develop and show loyalty, partly by making moral judgements about others. In project 3, the sense of loyalty evolved within each party (managers versus employees) during an uncertainty period when the conflict erupted publicly. As my involvement with the management team developed, I found myself identifying with their feelings of being betrayed by the employees' unionising initiative. I realised that it was difficult for me to be empathetic to the employees' perspectives due to my judgmental attitudes about labour unions and even more, due to my resentment about the way they chose to begin their initiative.

The third argument concerns conflicts of multiple loyalties: I realised that being loyal to multiple groups means that I, and other members of the groups, are inevitably faced with conflict since these loyalties generate competing demands (Connor, 2007). This may result in situations that force us to take sides, even if this inevitably involves excluding other parties (Kleinig 2014; Fletcher 1993). I found that as a consultant, in many cases I tended to take the side of the management.

A fourth argument is that a conflict or crisis situation puts the question of loyalty to a test. A crisis or breakdown can serve as an impetus for questioning our taken-for-granted

assumptions. The crisis of trust between the employees and the management evoked questions of loyalty in both parties (the employees questioned the management's loyalty to the Centre's legacy; the management questioned the employees' loyalty, which meant not involving the union as a divisive factor).

A fifth argument is that loyalty is a dynamic and changeable process: one's loyalty to particular people, an organisation or a specific cause is not stable, but changes over time, and is influenced, among other things, by the change in group memberships and by changes in social circumstances (e.g., downsizing). Today's frequent organisational changes (e.g., mergers and acquisitions, turnovers), challenge employees' loyalty, since the organisations are transformed into a different entity from the ones they joined (Kleinig 2014).

Bearing in mind these arguments about loyalty, helped me understand the complex processes of loyalty regarding consultant-client relationships. As consultants we bring a set of perceptions and biases to our interactions with our clients, which impact the ways we understand and interpret the organisational occurrences (e.g., in this narrative, attitudes towards labour unions, the significance of loyalty). In this sense, we are neither objective observers nor detached facilitators. Being aware of our biases and drawing attention to our own and to our consultees' viewpoints might help us take 'a detour of detachment' in Elias' terms (1987, p. 6) and better understand our assumptions and the experiences which at times we get caught up in. Moreover, while working with management teams, especially for extended periods of time, as consultants, we become part of the teams, even if only temporarily. This work setting creates, in many cases, a strong sense of identification with the management's view which might generate blind spots in understanding other points of view. As consultants, we have to be aware of our tendency to identify with our clients and to the inherent conflict of loyalties which we experience with regard to various groups in the organisation.

As consultants we are invited to work with management teams, or they give us the mandate to work with other groups within organisations. As such, we are expected to be loyal to the management's agenda and we are obliged to operate within the client's organisational policy. Thus, we are biased towards the management's interests. Being aware of this

constraint might open up the opportunity to discuss our mutual expectations with our consultees and reflect on our taken-for-granted assumptions, while working together.

Further Exploration

In P4, I would like to further explore the impact of loyalty on identity formation. In addition, I aim to examine the role that emotions play within loyalty-based relationships, drawing on authors who research emotions, such as Burkitt, Fineman, Ahmed and Wetherell.

Project 4: Loyalty within a Family Business

Introduction

In my third project, I explored the concept of loyalty during a crisis of trust between management and employees when the management planned to implement organisational changes. The sense of loyalty in both parties emerged as each side (the employees and the management) became entrenched in its own viewpoint, despite the absence of full agreement within each group. Being loyal to one group highlighted the exclusionary position of one party over the other. Loyalty was experienced as an emerging process, in which people in each group identified with and felt attached to their joint interests and struggle. Reflecting on my role as a consultant in the narrative, I became more aware of my tendency to take the management's side within the consulting process. I realised how this pattern hindered my ability to take a more detached position and to encourage the management members to reflect on their role during the crisis.

In my fourth project, I will further explore the concept of loyalty, this time within a family business. A major transition regarding the business succession was planned and evoked intense emotional reactions among two brothers, who jointly owned and managed a family business, even though the transition was only in its preliminary stage of discussions. The theme of loyalty will be explored in the context of this significant process in the life cycle of a family business, a process which is described in the family business literature (Leiß and Zehrer, 2018; Ward, 2004, 2016; Handler, 1994; Miller, Steier, and Le Breton-Miller, 2003) as emotionally volatile, and one that puts the question of loyalty to the test.

I will continue to inquire into my involvement in an emotionally charged relational process, my inclination to be cautious in my interventions, sensitive to keeping the 'domestic peace' between the two siblings, and the conflict of loyalties that I experienced.

Narrative

Background

I was approached by Ben to meet him and his brother, Abe, co-managers of a successful family-owned business, to explore future directions of the organisational management.

Since their father's death, Abe and Ben, have jointly managed the company as equal partners with a clear agreement on the division of responsibilities: Abe, the older brother, has been in charge of the business development and the commercial affairs of the company, and Ben, the younger one, has been responsible for the internal processes of the company (Human Resources, IT and legal activities). The company, which is located in Israel, was established 50 years ago, and has developed, manufactured and sold biotechnology products to local and global markets. With the brothers' joint management for the last thirty years, the company has successfully grown by expanding its line of products and their presence in the global markets. More than 300 employees work in the company, the majority of whom have been employed for more than 5 years. All the company's senior managers grew into their current roles from within. In recent years, the brothers' children have joined the company in junior positions.

During the last two years, I have been involved as a consultant on several projects in the organisation for defined needs (e.g., a post-merger integration process, an internal employee satisfaction survey). Ben was the one who initiated all my consulting processes. However, when reviewing the findings or discussing the implications of potential development ideas, Abe and Ben were jointly involved.

In December 2019, following Ben's call, I met Abe and Ben in their offices aiming to explore the possibility of recruiting a CEO to the company. The succession issue of the company had been occasionally raised in our past discussions, but had never been a focal issue in my consulting work. Abe and Ben informed me that they had held previous discussions on the succession issue with a family business consultant, who had proposed two alternatives: either to sell the company or to recruit a CEO. When I began my consulting role with the brothers, this consultant was no longer working with them. Both brothers agreed that their children (the third generation), who were already working in the company, were not yet ready to assume a leadership position. The narrative will focus on the consulting process exploring the option to recruit a CEO from outside the company. The siblings requested my help both in the recruitment process and in supporting the onboarding process of the new CEO (e.g., supporting the integration of the new CEO in the company, designing working processes between the owners and the new CEO).

A Major Milestone in a Family Business's Life Cycle

Ruth, the long-serving secretary, welcomed me when I entered the company's office, asked about my family's wellbeing and escorted me to the meeting room, not before asking if I would like to have my usual cup of coffee. At that moment, as in my previous meetings, I felt as if I had arrived home when I entered the company's offices from the noisy street. The colourful carpets, the pictures on the walls and the aroma of freshly brewed coffee made me feel as if I were in a warm, homely place.

Abe and Ben were already waiting in the spacious meeting room. Their father's picture, the company's founder, occupied a prominent place on the wall. His name, which is also the company's name, appeared at the bottom of the picture. Abe opened the meeting and said that, following discussions with his brother, they had decided that this was now the right time to recruit a CEO to the business. In answer to my question of why specifically now, Abe answered that he would soon be celebrating his 70th birthday and his brother was already 65 years old. This was the right time to reduce their day-to-day involvement in operations, and to focus on strategic issues regarding future directions of the company. Ben added that running the company had recently become highly demanding, requiring frequent business travel abroad. I did not ask any questions about their decision and took it as a starting point for discussing the matter further. It seemed to me then that they were both in agreement about the way forward.

In the meeting, we discussed the options for headhunting the most suitable candidate from outside the company, or whether to promote from within. Abe said that he would prefer someone from within the company, who was familiar with his management approach, and who he would be able to mentor into the new role. He added that he was not sure whether one of the existing senior managers was ready for this position. Ben was more decisive and said that they must search for a candidate from outside the company and justified his claim, saying that none of the senior managers was capable of leading the organisation. I mirrored their different approaches and asked Abe whether his preference to fill the CEO position from within the company reflected his need to have more control over the transition process. He thought for a few seconds and answered that it would allow him to manage the process from up close. Ben listened but did not intervene. Towards the end of the meeting,

we agreed that I would prepare a CEO role description for subsequent discussions. Before I left, I asked whether their children were updated regarding their decision to recruit a CEO, and both replied in the affirmative.

On my way home, trying to review our meeting, I was disappointed with the course of the conversation. Reflecting on the meeting, I realised that there was a dissonance between the discussion's subject matter – the continuity of the business – and the way it was discussed, in that the emotions it clearly evoked were not talked about. I was not satisfied with my interpretation, and moreover, I was annoyed that I had not been aware of the patterns of emotional avoidance – both theirs and mine as a consultant. I regretted that I did not encourage them to talk about their feelings about this critical transition and did not ask how their children had reacted to their decision. I tried to explain to myself that the brothers seemed at peace with their decision, and that they expected that I would help them to realise it.

[Recalculating the Decision About the Business Succession](#)

In the ensuing meetings, which had a clearly defined goal – to discuss the role definition and the relevant experience, skills, and capabilities we would look for in potential candidates – I did not interrupt the sequence of the discussions and did not recommend them to reflect on their feelings. I did not feel that it was appropriate to raise this issue. Abe led the meetings and was highly involved in trying to be very precise in defining and articulating the preferred CEO profile. Ben was less involved in this aspect, but was more engaged in outlining the recruiting process. I perceived this as an indication that the process was being managed effectively and as a good sign that Abe and Ben were in agreement with the plan of action. Following the agreement on the CEO profile, we interviewed a few candidates, with whom they had had previous business interactions.

After five candidates were interviewed, we met to review the process and to discuss how to proceed. At the beginning of our meeting, Abe said that both he and his brother considered one of the applicants to be the most suitable candidate. Yet, he added that after those interviews, he now had second thoughts regarding their decision to nominate a CEO. In the process of the interviews, he realised that the leading candidate was ready to assume the

CEO role immediately. Abe was astonished at the possibility that an outsider could undertake such a managerial role without much preparation. He added that the interviews with potential candidates made him understand that their decision was a real and imminent one, and at that point, he understood that the company was not prepared for this transition. To my question: in what sense did he understand this, he answered that they had to review their commercial contracts with their strategic customers, which stated that they were obligated to be actively involved as actual managers of the company. Abe added that they would have to prepare the business for such a transition.

I noticed that Ben was very quiet during the meeting and that he restrained himself from commenting. This led me to ask whether they were ready for this transition, but neither of them answered and Abe abruptly concluded that they had to postpone the process. Ben was silent. I felt as if his silence was thunderous. When I asked for his thoughts on the matter, he was vague, trying to avoid saying anything specific. He agreed that some work would need to be done, yet he disagreed with his brother that they should suspend the whole process. I realised that I was very tense, trying to be attentive to any verbal nuances and tone of voice. I felt as if a storm was erupting below the surface and my attempts to help or invite them to an open discussion were being rejected. At the end of the meeting, Abe proposed that he and Ben meet again to identify what actions would be needed to proceed further. We separated without a plan of action.

I left the meeting with a heavy heart, realising for the very first time that there was a huge gap between the brothers regarding the business's future. I was frustrated and worried. I cared about the siblings and I was afraid that the conflict would explode, ruin the relationship between them and hurt their ability to lead the family business in this significant transition. I felt as if they were sitting on a ticking time bomb and their mutual loyalty was being put to the test.

[Covid-19 Pandemic – an Accelerating Factor in Managing the Family Conflict?](#)

After our last meeting, the Covid-19 pandemic broke out and the company, like others in Israel and worldwide, had to close their offices and transition to working from home. I

talked with Ben several times during that period about issues relating to the new work setting and how to support the employees during this stressful and uncertain time. Ben was very occupied in managing the remote working operation, and we did not mention the CEO recruiting process.

Four months after we had started the discussion on the succession process, Ben called and informed me that they had decided to freeze the process of recruiting a CEO. He explained that, due to the uncertainty and vulnerable situation, Abe had withdrawn from the process. I recommended that the three of us meet to review what had been achieved up to now. Ben insisted that he would prefer for only the two of us to meet. I sensed his distress and agreed to meet him alone.

When we met, Ben was agitated. He spoke loudly, which was unusual for him. For the first time since I had started working with the company, I saw he was emotionally distraught and openly talked about the disagreements between Abe and him. I listened attentively and was astonished at the depth of the rupture. I could feel Ben's distress, grief and vulnerability, but I also began to feel uncomfortable that I was not able to hear Abe's point of view. I was torn between my willingness to support Ben and a sense of disloyalty to Abe, whose voice was not being heard in this meeting.

Ben shared that, in keeping with the recommendation of the family business consultant, who had worked with them before I began consulting, they had agreed that their children would start their professional careers working in other companies before considering whether or not to join their family company. However, all of their children were currently working in the company. Ben painfully admitted that since their children had joined the company, tensions had arisen between him and Abe. I admitted to myself that I did not notice any such tensions. Ben noted that they both were very critical about the performance of the other brother's children, adding that his own daughter had been insulted by Abe in front of other managers about a report she had presented. I asked whether he had discussed these sensitive issues with his brother, and if not – would he consider doing so. He answered that he could not open up this discussion with Abe and preferred to avoid such a conversation.

I proposed that the three of us meet to discuss those tensions, or that they could meet the family business consultant, who had worked with them three years ago before I began working with them. Ben sharply refused either suggestion. I felt that we were all stuck. I was certain that the pattern of avoidance would not be helpful. Yet, for the first time in the process, I heard Ben talking openly about his painful feelings. I thought that being in touch with the pain and hurt might open the way for a frank discussion between the two brothers. I decided to encourage them to meet and openly discuss the sensitive situation.

Initial Reflections on the Narrative

Tolstoy's famous opening sentence of *Anna Karenina*, 'All happy families are alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way' (Tolstoy, 1875-1877/2001, p. 1), came to my mind while reflecting on the described narrative. The narrative focuses on a significant decision that the siblings who, after co-managing the company for thirty years, now have to make regarding the continuity of the business. The alternatives of selling the company or handing over the reins to the next generation, had been explored in the past and rejected by the brothers. The narrative describes a crisis that arose while recruiting a CEO, who was not a family member, from outside the company.

The discussions and interviewing process evoked disagreements and emotional reactions between the siblings regarding the future of the company. Some of the emotions were expressed outwardly during our meetings (e.g., anxieties regarding future relations with customers and suppliers, guilt feelings towards the senior managers who would not get an opportunity to become CEO, resentment towards the candidate who declared that he was willing to assume the role immediately). However, other feelings were left unspoken and were disclosed only when the dispute intensified.

In retrospect, I am now more aware that during our joint meetings, I was very cautious towards the brothers and did not encourage them to reflect on their feelings and talk about sensitive issues such as their children's reactions to their decision. I realised that I had been colluding with their emotional suppression and I was afraid of opening up a family

'Pandora's box' which could potentially ruin the harmonious relationship that I perceived existed between the two brothers and might even breach their mutual loyalty and commitment to manage the company and maintain the family unity. In hindsight, I now realise that underlying my concern not to harm the delicate relationship between the brothers, is my assumption that a sense of loyalty means uniformity of opinions and fewer disagreements, an assumption I have noticed before but nonetheless it persists.

Moreover, I avoided expressing my own feelings (e.g., after our joint first meeting, explaining to myself that I did not want to interfere in the structured agenda presented by Abe). As the recruiting process proceeded, I was surprised by the intense emotions it evoked between the brothers (e.g., anger, disappointment, distancing) and even in me. It felt as if the harmonious picture, that I had created in my imagination about the brothers' relationship, had been shattered. I question myself whether my attempt or need to portray an ideal, 'happy family' picture, blurred my perception of the underlying tensions between the two brothers? I ask myself whether this view relates to the extreme importance that I attribute to the value of a family? From a distance, I realise that exploring the brothers' and my emotional reactions can serve as a method for gaining a deeper understanding of the complex relationships among the organisation's members and how the sense of loyalty is experienced by them, a theme that I will explore further.

The question of the business succession became a tangible one as the interviewing of potential candidates progressed. It was no longer a theoretical possibility, it had now become a concrete act. Moreover, interviewing an external candidate, a 'stranger', who is not a family member (or 'like a family member') clearly defined the borders between who is included or excluded. Dealing with the business succession might have, consciously or unconsciously, put to the test the issue of the brothers' loyalty towards diverse people: their father and their children, the firm's senior managers and to each other. I wondered whether the disagreements between the siblings regarding the continuity of the company indicated a conflict of loyalties with an historical charge. I question whether continuity of the business by a family member (an alternative that did not arise during our joint meetings) or a manager from within (an option that Abe preferred) showed loyalty, whereas recruiting from outside (an alternative that Ben favoured), might have been seen as disloyalty to the

father's legacy. In our joint meetings, neither of these questions concerning loyalty were mentioned explicitly, nor was the issue of the father's heritage and his expectations regarding the family business' future raised. Yet the father's presence was very keenly felt, and both siblings had acknowledged, in our past conversations, that the business's foundations had been established by him. In retrospect, I am aware that the questions of loyalty or conflict of loyalties did not arise explicitly. Yet, some of the dilemmas regarding the siblings' sense of loyalty towards the senior managers, their children, and themselves, can be understood by analysing the brothers' discussions about the potential CEO candidate. For instance, in one of our meetings, Abe proposed to consider promoting one of the senior managers, emphasising his many years of employment and high commitment to the company. Furthermore, in another example revealed through discussion, their children, the third generation of the family firm, had begun working in the family business. In our private conversation, Ben told me that, despite the brothers' earlier decision not to employ their own children in the business, the two had not held an open discussion since then about their children's future development in the business. The criticism and sensitivity that the brothers began to feel towards the other's children could indicate a conflict of loyalties (towards the children, between the brothers). Even though the sense of loyalty was not openly expressed or discussed, nevertheless it was hinted at or implied in conversations, and became even more pointed when a conflict developed.

In retrospect, I am now more aware that loyalty for me, in this case, meant loyalty to the value of the family, which I viewed as maintaining the family's unity and harmony. I was concerned to ensure that the diverse opinions between the brothers would be heard, that the decision would be based on mutual agreement and consensus and that the 'domestic peace' would be preserved. Opening an emotional discussion, conflicts and disagreements were perceived by me as a potential threat that could unravel of the family fabric and harm the sense of loyalty. As a consultant, I wonder why I was overly cautious about confronting the siblings with the emotions that the succession process had evoked in them and in me.

As such, my animating questions are: How was my affective experience formed in this emotionally charged event and how did it impact the consulting process? To what extent could my own sensitivity to a sibling relationship have affected my ability to observe and

support such relationships? Why was I so cautious in my consulting interventions? Why did I find it difficult in the moment to take risks which could undermine the delicate relationship between the brothers, their collective identity and sense of loyalty and could damage the relationship between me and both of them? And what does loyalty mean in such an emotionally laden event?

In the following sections, I will outline the unique characteristics of family businesses, which exemplify the inherent emotional tensions in such organisations, as a context for analysing the narrative. I will expand the inquiry about displaying emotions in the workplace, and in particular in family businesses, in order to better understand the dynamic relations between the siblings, the emotional dilemmas and the feeling of threat to the identity of the family business through the discussions about the firm's continuity. Furthermore, I will inquire into the consultant's work in an emotionally charged field (such as the events described in this narrative) when experiencing a conflict of loyalties.

Family Businesses

Background

Family businesses are a common organisational configuration worldwide and play a significant role in the EU economy and the USA economy (Kets de Vries 1993; Kaslow, 1993; Tagiuri and Davis, 1996; Credit Suisse Group AG, 2018). In Israel, the percentage of family-owned public companies (with a single controlling party) stands at 88% of all public companies (ISA, 2019). Despite their weight and contribution to the economy worldwide, research on family businesses' nature and functioning has been relatively scant (Morris et al., 1997; Tagiuri and Davis, 1996). In recent decades, there have been increasing attempts to construct a theoretical framework to delineate the unique features of the family business and the main issues and dilemmas of interest to those organisations. (Sharma, 2004; Gersick, 2015)

In order to better understand the context of the described narrative, I will focus on specific characteristics which illustrate the inherent tensions in such organisations. At the same time, although family businesses have unique characteristics, they also help us understand

non-family businesses. Moreover, as members of organisations, we all bring with us experiences from our own families and familial relational patterns, such as the constraint in expressing our emotions, sensitivity or insensitivity to otherness, and how we relate to authority. These all affect how we interact with others within the organisational settings (Triest, 1999).

In organisational literature, family businesses are described as systems that are composed of two separate "sub-systems": a business system and a family system (e.g., Labaki, Michael-Tsabari, and Zachary, 2013). Kets-de-Vries et al. (2007), for example, define a family business as 'a unique organisation since it encompasses the overlap of a system based on rational, economic principles and a system organised and based on emotions' (p. 26). Thus, emotions are mainly attributed to the family sub-system (Carlock and Ward, 2001). Whiteside and Brown (1991) claim that, 'since the purpose of business was to be logical and profit making, the emotional aspects of the family were an interference that needed to be excluded' (p. 384). According to this research approach, the contradicting focuses of the sub-systems in a family business create an inherent conflict.

Viewing the family business as a combination of sub-systems, and attributing a distinct identity to each one, either rational or emotional, is based on the assumptions of a systems theories framework (Bertalanffy, 1968; Katz and Kahn, 1966; Senge, 1990). Systems theories view the organisation as a whole system which has a distinct boundary with its environment and is composed of sub-systems. The systems theories favour the idea of alignment of the system's parts, an alignment which enables the system to move towards an optimally efficient state. According to the systems approach, when describing the family business as an entity which is comprised of two contradicting sub-systems (family versus business; emotional versus rational), the potential for a dysfunctional system is higher (Kets-de-Vries et al., 2007).

Stacey, Griffin and Shaw (2000), who criticise systems thinking approaches, propose a different view of the organisation and term their approach as 'the perspective of complex responsive processes of relating'. They argue that 'the systems theories focus primarily on what we see as the consequences of this split, namely the objectification of human

interaction as a system and the exclusion of human freedom from the system itself into the realm of reasoned choice; it does not address how people “get it done anyway” in their ordinary everyday activities’ (ibid, p. 83). The perspective of complex responsive processes of relating understands the global pattern of actions, which we call ‘organisation’, to arise simply and only from the interweaving of everyone’s interactions. Viewing an organisation as a composition of separate parts, as if it were a system, is a perception of the organisation as a ‘machine’. As such, the family business is considered as an abstract entity which is governed by two disciplinary processes. Relating to the family business as a system comprising two separate sub-systems: the family and the business, and assuming that the business part is neutral and free of emotions, while the family part is ruled solely by emotions, ignores the complexity of day-to-day experiences and the interpersonal relationships.

Most of the research into family businesses, as stated, relies heavily on systems theories. However, my literature review on family businesses (e.g., Morris, et al., 1997; Sharma, 2004; Wiess, 2012; Labaki, et al., 2013) also reveals characteristics which are unique to family businesses and emphasises the complexity and inherent tension within them (such as, the centralisation of decision-making, the informal control mechanisms and insistence on maintaining privacy). These include the following characteristics that are relevant to the described narrative: First, conflicting demands on family members due to holding multiple roles. Secondly, the high level of long-standing and interdependency among the family members which simultaneously unites and divides. Thirdly, managing the family owned business with a long-term orientation which strives for stability and continuity.

The overlapping of simultaneous roles that family members have as a relative, an owner and holding a functional or managerial role, serves as a source of both advantages and constraints to the family business (Tagiuri and Davis, 1996 and Brundin and Sharma, 2012). The overlapping of the roles may lead to conflicting demands and expectations that the family member is expected to fulfil (taking care of the family welfare, the business return on investment and the operational effectiveness), on the one hand. Yet, on the other hand, this may lead to understanding the multiple perspectives in managing a business. Tagiuri and Davis (1996) term those features ‘bivalent attributes’, meaning they both enable and

constrain, since they reflect a fundamental tension and the relational complexity among the family business' members.

The disagreement between the brothers regarding the firm's future succession and the potential impacts of nominating an external CEO, may reflect the conflicting emphases of their responsibilities: worrying about the commercial ramifications (would it impact continued links with some clients?); concerns about the senior managers employed in the company (would they consider an external appointment to be a threat to their own promotion and perceive this decision as a lack of appreciation of their capabilities to lead the company?) or worries about their children's future development in the business (would their act be valued as a betrayal of their parental responsibility to ensure their children's promotion prospects and positioning in the company?). Thus, the siblings' multiple responsibilities and commitments, which were subtly expressed in our joint meetings, mirror the inherently potential conflicts that they experienced. These tensions may also reflect a conflict of loyalties.

The second characteristic of family businesses that sheds light on the narrative is the *strong interdependency* between family members and their long-standing relationships. The shared history, the common family identity and the high emotional involvement contribute to the sense of a joint fate and to the feeling of 'we-ness'. Labaki, et al, (2013) claim that the stronger the degree of overlap between the family and the business ('enmeshed family businesses' in their words, pp. 311-312), the higher the mutual expectations for strong emotional cohesion and loyalty (ibid, p. 312). However, this strong interdependency and closeness can also lead to resentments, rivalry, and power struggles among family members (Tagiuri and Davis, 1996). Thus, the nexus between members of the family business may be viewed as a paradoxical one. The tighter the bond, the greater the potential for a rupture if things go wrong.

In the narrative, among the factors that gave the brothers a high level of identification with and commitment to the family business, were their shared history, their father bequeathing the business to them and their successful joint management for more than thirty years. The presence of the founding father was felt in the meetings, even if his name was not directly

mentioned. His picture was prominently displayed on the board room wall and the business was named after him. Once their own children began working in the business, despite their earlier decision not to allow this, their interdependency became even stronger. These factors (and others) may have helped the relationship between them and their family members to remain strong. Yet, at the same time, these may have been the source of the unspoken tension during our joint meetings which bubbled just below the surface and began to rise as the CEO recruitment process progressed.

Within family owned and managed firms, the management time horizons are more long term oriented, with a relatively higher degree of job security (Morris et al., 1997; Weiss, 2012; Ward, 1997), avoiding employee layoffs during difficult economic periods and a tendency to low risk-taking. Kets de Vries et al., (2007) explain that since families ‘think in generations’, (p. 52), loyalty is based and built on the development of a long-term relationship with its diverse stake holders: customers, suppliers, consultants and employees. These tendencies promote a sense of stability, yet weaken the sense of urgency to challenge the existing ways of operating the business.

All the senior managers in the described family business had grown up from within, and most of the workers are long-time employees. My consulting work was, and still is, a long-term working relationship. Yet, scholars (e.g., Morris et al., 1997) distinguish between family members in managerial positions, whose membership in the family business is by virtue of inheritance, and who tend to remain with the firm for their entire career, as compared with those whose membership is by definition temporary (Rodrigue et al. 1999). The distinction between family and non-family members is attributed to differences in the sense of identification with the family firm (e.g., a sense of ‘oneness’ with the family firm) and in the level of attachment and/or separation. I will expand on this topic when discussing the search for a CEO, who is not a family member.

I find that the scholars’ attempts (e.g., Sharma, 2004, Morris et al., 1997) to delineate the unique features of family businesses, indicate that family organisations are inherently complex and reflect contradictions: family versus business, tradition versus change, individuality versus collectivism (Schuman, Stutz, and Ward, 2010). The effort to outline a

uniform profile of family businesses or to portray them in a binary configuration, does not take into account the unique nuances of the diverse family businesses, such as cultural and social unique context (e.g., the centrality of the family in different cultures). Although the sense of loyalty is not a central theme in the literature about family businesses, nor was it discussed explicitly between the brothers and me, it is plausible to assume that loyal relationships among family members are often taken for granted. Nevertheless, a common challenge that most family firms confront is the question of succession which, in many cases, even intensifies the inherent emotional tension.

Intergenerational Succession Process

The dominant issue shared by members of family businesses, and which is the subject of much research, is the question of succession (Morris et al. 1997; Ward, 2004, 2016; Weiss, 2012). During their life cycles, all businesses face the question of continuity, yet the succession processes represent a significant change confronting family businesses (Leiß and Zehrer, 2018). This is a complex process since it involves financial, as well as emotional aspects. This complexity stems from factors such as: choosing the successor (e.g., a family- or non-family member) and a transition to the next generation that often requires getting accustomed to new management styles and may give rise to tension between the management perceptions and habits of the family founder and the new management (Miller, Steier and Le Breton-Miller, 2003). Based on a multi-year study, and on consulting to family businesses, Ward (2004) argues that intergenerational transitions are complex, emotionally charged and require re-orientation in the way that organisations are managed: from central management of the owner to shared management among siblings, to spreading management out among many family members in the next or succeeding generations. This succession transition intensifies the interdependence among siblings, cousins, and other relatives, and leads to power struggles among involved parties (Morris et al., 1997).

Norbert Elias, a process sociologist, claims that from birth we are dependent on others as they are dependent on us. This is seen in the imperative that we need love, recognition, respect, care, money or other supports from others and they from us (Elias, 1998, p. 132; Mowles, 2015). Elias argues that interdependency among people emerges over time as a

result of diverse needs and functions that each individual maintains in relation to other people's functions (2001, p. 14). Those functions (e.g., a managerial function, a family role, in the described narrative) create a web of interdependency among the people who are engaged in and forms asymmetrical power relations. Power, according to Elias (1978), is a structural characteristic of all human relating whose distribution within people's networks is changeable in different times or circumstances (ibid, p. 131). This mutual dependency leads to power struggles, conflicts, and puts questions of trust and loyalty to the test.

The focus of the described narrative is the brothers' decision about succession in the business. Being co-owners and co-managers of the company, by definition indicates a strong interdependency between them. The discussions regarding recruiting a non-family member, a 'stranger', for the CEO position, can be interpreted as evoking fears of potential disturbance or potential change in the power relations between them. Abe proposed considering the promotion of a senior manager from within the company, whereas Ben firmly resisted this suggestion. The question that I had asked them was whether these different views expressed a concern regarding a potential change of control or in retrospect, whether it was a worry about undermining the subtle balance of the power relations between the brothers. It was only later that I realised how critical their children were in that power struggle. Thus, the succession process is not a process of loyalty between two people, but can be seen as a relational process among the many parties that are involved (i.e., children, allies and/or those who are next in line for promotion).

However, the succession process elicited emotions which were partially overt (e.g., Ben's frustration when Abe decided to suspend the recruiting process) and partly covert and were not expressed explicitly (e.g., Ben's anger at and vulnerability towards his brother for humiliating his daughter). I recognised the brothers' difficulty in expressing their emotions during our joint meetings and my avoidance in encouraging them to an open dialogue. Reflecting on the brothers' emotional experience might help to understand the dynamic relations between them and their emotional conflicts regarding the business continuity. Focusing on the emotions that emerged might help to pinpoint the dilemmas that the siblings experienced regarding their loyalty to their father's legacy, their children, the next generation, and towards the employees. I will also attempt to reflect on my own feelings

during the consulting process and my role as a consultant, in such an emotionally charged event.

Emotions in the Workplace and within Family Owned Businesses

Emotions at the Workplace

Research on emotions in organisational behaviour has developed into a major field over recent decades (Ashkanasy and Humphrey, 2011; Küpers, and Weibler, 2008; Fineman, 2004; Rafaeli and Sutton, 1989). Among scholars, there has been increased acknowledgment that organisations are emotional arenas (Fineman, 1993, 2000). Some also argue that emotional expression by members of organisations is a form of communication (e.g., Rafaeli and Sutton, 1989; Fineman, 2000) and a way in which they perceive, interpret, control and evaluate their own, and the shared organisational, situations (Küpers and Weibler, 2008).

Although there is broad agreement today among scholars that organisations are an emotional field, they disagree about how to define emotions (Ashkanasy and Humphrey, 2011). This difficulty stems from the different theoretical approaches and prisms used to examine emotions in organisations. Some scholars (e.g., Kets de Vries and Miller, 1985) inquire into emotions at work from a more individual-oriented psychodynamic perspective, whereas others (e.g., Fineman, 2000 and Hochschild, 1983) research emotions at the workplace, emphasising the interpersonal and context-oriented viewpoint.

According to Fineman, emotions pervade and characterise diverse processes occurring in the organisation such as 'the way roles are enacted and learned, power is exercised, trust is held, commitment formed and decisions made' (2000, p. 1). Moreover, our awareness of expressed emotions by organisational members can draw our attention to emotional working harms as stress, pains and emotional suppression. Burkitt (1999), as well as Fineman, both drawing on the relational approach, argue that emotional 'expressions are not, then, the 'outer' signal of 'inner' feelings, but are signs in the networks of social relations and interdependencies' (Burkitt, 1999, pp. 118-119, italics in original). As opposed to the individual-oriented psychodynamic approach, emotions (including at work) are not considered to be an inner process occurring within the individual, but rather as a reciprocal

process which expresses interpersonal relationships of interdependence and power (ibid, p. 37).

In this and in my previous projects, I have discussed emotions and the ways they are expressed as relational processes. For example, in project 2 the joint discussions of the senior female managers during the mentoring programme revealed to them the gap between the management's gender equality policy and the day-to-day practices. Sharing their frustrating experiences (e.g., only males were promoted to senior management positions during company-wide rounds of promotions) as well as the mentees' experiences (e.g., gender salary disparity), evoked among the female managers a sense of disappointment and resentment towards the management. In project 3, the employees were anxious and uncertain regarding the management's future intentions to implement organisational changes. Rumours regarding the potential shut down of certain organisational units and employees' lay-offs started to spread along the corridors. The management, on the other hand, felt that the employees betrayed their trust by joining the union. In this current project 4, the siblings were anxious and uncertain when they started to explore the company's future continuity. As the CEO recruitment process went ahead, these fears even led to an emotional conflict and power struggle between the two and to a halting of the recruitment process. All these examples show how emotions emerge in relational ways, exemplifying the interdependency and reciprocal processes among the involved parties and are not just inner process occurring within the individuals.

Looking back reflectively, I realised that in my previous projects, as well as in this narrative, I, as the consultant, was emotionally engaged as well. While in project 2, I identified with the female mentors' sense of anger towards the management, in project 3, I felt disappointed by the employees' actions and identified with the sense of betrayal felt by the management. In the narrative of this project, I found that I was fearful of causing any harm to the relationship between the brothers. Consequently, I was cautious in my consulting interventions and avoided encouraging the siblings to discuss the sensitive issues.

According to Fineman (2000), evaluating emotions is problematic, since they are not always known and understandable to the individual in any particular moment. Moreover, many emotional experiences are rudimentary and transitory and even confused. It is difficult to

attribute emotions to concrete situations, and emotions are intertwined within our social practices. Fineman (2004) also emphasises that an emotion 'is a panoply of voices and representations of the self, the brain, the body, upbringing and culture' (ibid, p. 720). Our emotions are reactions to a current experience, as well as a representation and echoing of previous emotional reactions that we experienced in various social settings and in our interactions with others. In retrospect, I realise that during the CEO recruitment process, emotional aspects were covered up. The discussions focused mainly on defining the candidate's profile, the interviewing process and the need for secrecy about the entire process. Emotions were suppressed by the siblings and were mainly expressed later on when Abe's fear of loss of control and Ben's anger at Abe rose to the surface.

Like Fineman, Hochschild also argues that as social individuals, we uphold a previous set of expectations on 'what feelings are feel-able' which rely on 'a prior notion of what feelings are 'on the cultural shelf' ' (ibid, 1998, p. 250). In this view, different organisations may adopt the wider emotional rules of the society of which they are a part (Fineman, 2000, p. 2), but they may also modify these rules to fit in with their own emotional codes (e.g., what is 'right' for the company's owners, the firm's executives or the non-family employees).

In other words, our emotions are context-dependent on the social and cultural environment in which we operate and this influences how we recognise, label and express our emotions. Drawing attention to the emotions of the involved parties (including mine) in the various consulting processes, is a critical source for better understanding their dynamic relationships. Yet the difficulty is to 'read' the emotional expressions and understand their meaning and the entangled relations between people. It often requires distance and a reflective process, such as writing and analysing this narrative. In Elias' terms, I have to 'take a detour via detachment' (1987, p. 6) of my emotional involvement in order to understand it more fully.

Looking back, in both Project 2 and Project 3, being able to discern the emotional palette of the involved people, helped me to obtain a more nuanced picture of the evolving relationship, to better understand the power relations and to identify the enabling and constraining forces in those conflicting situations. As a consultant, a significant part of my

role is to be attentive to the range of emotional reactions that are expressed explicitly and implicitly by those who are involved in the organisational occurrence, in order to enhance our understanding about the issue at hand, especially in situations of heightened emotions. Yet, being personally involved in the consulting processes, and especially, in emotionally charged ones, makes it harder for me to dispassionately decode those emotional signals. It was difficult for me to observe and identify the brothers' feelings, since they avoided expressing them and I avoided asking and encouraging them to speak about their feelings that they were reluctant to express. Hochschild (1983) describes the diverse ways we express our emotions as 'emotional labour.'

Emotional Labour

In the organisational context, members regulate or control their own emotions by expressing what is perceived by themselves as 'acceptable' (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993; Hochschild, 1983). Hochschild (1983) defines this process as an 'emotional labour' or emotion management (pp.253-255) where 'feeling rules' govern what people in different roles are expected to feel or display. According to Hochschild (1983, 1998), an act of emotional management is not only an intention, but also an attempt, conscious or unconscious, to induce certain feelings that we do not feel at first, or to suppress other feelings that we do; to try to form and reform our feelings to fit our interpretation of the group's cultural guidelines (ibid, P.253). However, Rafaeli and Sutton (1989) argue that there is no simple match between the emotions that organisational members feel and the feelings that they learn to express. Displaying emotions which are not in accordance with one's genuinely experienced emotions over a period of time may lead to 'emotional dissonance' and result in stress and emotional exhaustion (Brundin and Melin, 2006). Morris and Feldman (1997) claim that emotional dissonance is not a consequence of the conflict between genuinely felt emotions and emotions displayed in organisations, but rather a dimension of emotional labour. Our emotional labour within our diverse social settings (our family, working organisation and professional colleagues) is an ongoing forming and being formed process, which reflects our interdependency.

Family firms, like other organisations, are emotional arenas, yet, they are portrayed as even 'more likely contexts for high emotional intensity and wider breadth of experienced and

displayed emotions’ (Brundin and Sharma, 2010, p. 61). In the following section, I will expand on this point, drawing on the literature and on my experience as a consultant.

Emotions in family businesses

Scholars in the field of family businesses (e.g. Brundin and Sharma, 2010, Tagiuri and Davis, 1996, Labaki, Michael-Tsabari, and Zachary, 2013), drawing on systems theories, list several reasons why family businesses are emotionally laden organisations. Among them, the business structure (being an hybrid identity organisational form which is composed of two incompatible entities – the family and the business with a different organisational logic), the nature of the working processes (family members exercise multiple, competing roles where each role might require a different focus) and the strong attachment to the business (strong sense of ownership, belonging and identification that can lead both to pride and a sense of responsibility and to high expectations of certain rights and privileges, which are built up between the family members, but are largely unspoken). Brundin and Sharma (2012) coined the term ‘emotional messiness’ (p. 56), to describe the emotionally charged situation that family members experience in these business settings. Drawing on my experience as an organisational consultant working with diverse organisations, family and non-family businesses, I found that we can also get caught up in family-like relationships in any ‘business’ organisational logic. The tendency to a binary description of organisations as business versus family oriented, rational versus emotionally biased, does not reflect the complexity of the organisational reality.

So Brundin and Sharma (2012) suggest, similar to Hochschild’s ideas of ‘emotional labour’ (1983), that family members, who are exposed to and internalise the family emotional codes, import them into the family business. Emotional norms such as: the importance of expressing one’s feelings, the expected ways of how to communicate them, the kind of emotions that can legitimately be expressed to family members only, or to non-family members, or the permission to discuss emotionally charged issues such as succession plans. Skynner (2009), a family therapist, explains that different families tend to deal with emotions in varied ways (e.g., classifying ‘good’ or ‘bad’ emotions, being open or guarded regarding expressing emotions publicly). Each family develops ways of expressing or suppressing certain emotions, and even labelling some of them as taboo. These emotional

patterns are internalised and shared among the family members, and even transferred from one generation to the next (pp. 22, 33).

Looking back at the described narrative, I was expected by the brothers to help the search for a CEO, and to support the process of integrating him/her into the business. During the meetings, the dialogue was focused and goal-orientated on the recruitment process. The brothers avoided speaking about their disagreements and avoided answering my (few) questions regarding their feelings, in Hochschild's (1983) terms, to regulate or manage their emotions according to accepted and habitual 'feeling rules'. In retrospect, I understand that covert emotional expressions already arose in the meeting when Abe stated his reservations about continuing the search process for a CEO. In his statements and questions, his emotional expressions are hinted at: Is the business ready for such a move? Do we need to prepare for it? However, he does not explicitly state his fears or his preparedness for this move. Neither does Ben openly express his emotions, although his body language hinted at them (e.g., he was quiet, introverted and he lowered his eyes). I was not aware of these emotional expressions as they happened. With hindsight, I understand that the emotional reactions were masked, or as Hochschild (1983) defines it 'surface acting'. Moreover, it is also possible that the siblings felt it was risky to show emotions as it could undermine their position in the power struggle about the succession.

The fact that I avoided raising questions about the brothers' emotions concerning the family succession and recruitment of an external CEO, and that I steered away from getting in touch with my own emotions, could indicate a personal need of mine that I was unaware of at the time: my intense need to maintain the unity of the family and to nurture the harmonious relationship between the brothers. I question whether my perception of 'the family above all', which was imprinted in me as part of the society that I was brought up in, was the 'emotional law' that governed my emotional management and was a reciprocal response to the brothers' avoidance of expressing their emotions.

The emotional expressions (anger, frustration, disappointment) were hidden or in Hochschild's (1983) words 'deep acting' (p. 255) and were expressed when the conflict arose after Abe's decision to suspend the search for the CEO, against Ben's wishes. The

overt emotional discourse only took place when Ben asked to meet me privately. During this meeting, he expressed his immense anger at his brother and at the way Abe had insulted Ben's daughter. Ben firmly refused to accept my suggestion that the three of us meet to discuss these emotions. His refusal can be viewed as a recurrent familial relational pattern of avoiding an emotionally laden confrontation.

Although the research literature views the family business as an emotionally laden organisation, there is less reference to the emotional expressions between siblings, or other relatives in a family business. The psychological literature (e.g., Mitchell, 2004) concerning sibling relationships in the family describes conscious and unconscious emotional processes such as identification, differentiation, closeness, competition and jealousy. The siblings' mutual dependency in managing a family business could create conflict avoiding patterns and a fear of an escalation into a dispute or rivalry. I claim that a diverse range of emotional feelings such as closeness, a sense of belonging and loyalty or distance, jealousy, hate and insult, can be found within any human relationship we are engaged in. Yet, these feelings may be magnified and intensified within the family since these relationships are inherently a given and not a voluntary choice.

The disagreements that erupted between the brothers, and their emotional reactions to the possibility of the entry of a 'stranger' into the family business and into their dyadic management relations, can be explored through the prism of self and collective identity.

The Stranger as a Threat to Identity and Loyalty to the Group

The interviewing of external candidates for the CEO role evoked emotional reactions in the brothers, which may reflect their anxiety and the threat to the identity of the family business. The leading candidate's willingness to accept the position immediately, made Abe rethink, and even doubt, the feasibility of the process (e.g., Whether an external candidate would be able to immediately take over their role and lead the company? Whether an outsider candidate would be able to absorb and understand the organisational culture and rules in a short time?). Abe's questions, and later his determined decision to suspend the recruiting process, may indicate the doubts that this step evoked and reveal his feelings of

anxiety, fear of losing control or concerns regarding the possibility of a significant challenge to his (and his children's) position of relative power in his relationships within the company. It may also indicate worries regarding the impacts on the relationship with his brother and on their joint management of the firm or a sense of a threat to the family business' identity. The rejection of the 'stranger' and the halting of the CEO recruitment process may reflect the attempts to exclude the 'other', to strengthen those who were included (e.g., family members or 'like family members') and to reinforce the sense of a joint identity.

Theories on organisational identity originally focused on the individual level, inspired by psychological conceptualisations of the self and identity (Whetten, Foreman and Dyer, 2014). Traditionally, self-identity formation was viewed as an inner psychological process, that develops in early childhood and remains relatively stable. The view of the self as 'located inside the individual, either in thought or in inner nature' (Burkitt, 2008, p. 10) was challenged by social scholars such as Elias (1987, 2000, 2001), Mead (1934) and Burkitt (2008), who view the self as formed in our social relations with others.

Norbert Elias (2001) claims that each individual is born into a group of people (e.g., his family, his society), which was there before him and he or she needs other people in order to be able to grow up (p.21). Through others, the child learns the language, the social manners and the pattern of instinct control which is acceptable in his society. The question 'who am I?' represents the forms of both the social and the individual being. There is no I-identity without we-identity, and Elias argues that 'we' identities are inseparable aspects of each 'I' identity (as explained by Stacy and Griffin, p. 17). From a long-term view, he claims that only the balance between the we-identity and the I-identity has undergone a noticeable change over the years (Elias, 2001, p. 27). 'Greater social integration and longer and longer chains of interdependency have also produced a pronounced tendency to individualization, weakening the sense of we in favour of a more marked sense of an I' (Mowles, 2015, PP. 254-255).

Like Elias, George Herbert Mead (1934), an American pragmatist, also claims that our sense of self is dependent on the social context and the other people we are engaged with:

Selves can only exist in definite relationships to other selves. No hard-and-fast line can be drawn between our own selves and the selves of others, since our own selves exist and enter as such into our experience only in so far as the selves of others exist and enter as such into our experience also (1934, p. 164).

Mead denotes people's tendency to generalise social patterns of interactions as an imaginary figuration of a 'whole', which they treat as if 'it' has values that constitute a 'cult'. Mead terms such idealisations as 'cult values', which the group members have developed throughout the group's history. Those who support the 'cult values' are perceived as being included in a certain collective, while those who do not, are excluded. Thus, cult values can serve both as a unifying and a dividing process. A process which establishes 'we' identities for both groups.

Belonging to a collective 'we', which is imagined as an idealised 'whole', free of constraints, may evoke in individuals a sense of an enlarged personality, in which they can accomplish their desires through their belonging to such a collective (Mead, 1934, P. 315). Their own values are derived from their attachment to a social group and become so ingrained in who they are. Thus, being part of a valued corporation or a family business, as in the described narrative, may elicit the same feeling of an enlarged self among the family members (and among non-family members) and may enhance the sense of idealised unity (Stacy and Mowles, 2016, p. 390).

Like Elias and Mead, Dalal, a psychotherapist and group analyst, points out that identity is 'a phenomenon that is embedded in a network of social interactions and relations' (Dalal, 1998, p. 190). He emphasises the centrality of our membership in various groups in forming who we are. Dalal claims that as humans we have a deep psychological need to belong (2009, p.77). We are born and naturally belong to certain groups, 'fundamental', or 'root' groups (e.g., family). Yet, during the course of our lives we choose to be part of other groups, 'spontaneous', or 'contingent' groups (ibid, p,74). Belonging to several groups which confront the individual with competing expectations and demands, may provoke anxiety and may 'threaten to undermine our sense of self' (Mowles, 2015, p. 135).

Nonetheless, being part of a group gives an illusory impression of unity and homogeneity to those who belong and an 'imagined wholeness' (Mowles, 2011, p. 170). However, paradoxically, when we look closely, we would find that the 'we' too is fragmented and diverse (Dalal, 2009, p.79). The brothers' dialogue about the future and succession of the family business, as well as their examination of who to include or reject from being part of their family business, their 'cult', and who is suitable to take the leading role in their family business, provoked anxiety among the siblings which was experienced as a threat that undermined the clearly-defined boundaries of the family business, the 'we-identity'.

Elias (2001) claims that our identity formation, which is an ongoing social process, evolves through processes of inclusion and exclusion. Inclusion and exclusion processes are the focus of Elias and Scotson's research (1994), as introduced first in project 1, on the relationships between two communities living in the same neighbourhood, who have a similar social background (some of them work in the same factory and their children study in the same schools). The difference between the two communities is that one group consists of families who have been living in the neighbourhood for two to three generations (the 'established' community) and had formed closed relational networks among the residents and a cohesive society. The second group, however, was new to the area.

As a consequence of a long history of living together, the 'established' group succeeded in forming a cohesive 'we identity' as a group which they used to glorify their achievements and to defame the social customs and manners of the newcomers. The newcomers, who did not have a shared history, became the 'outsiders' and had an inferior status, a status that they themselves were largely convinced by. The acceptance of the situation by the 'outsiders' enabled the 'established' group to maintain their superiority. Being included in one group, and at the same time excluding others, formed their 'we' and 'I' identity. Drawing on Elias and Scotson's study (1994), Stacey claims that: 'Growing up in different communities, with their different kinds of family structure, has a powerful effect on identity because of the very different sense of 'we' identities' (Stacey, 2006). Referring to family structure, Stacey highlights the impact of the multi-generational kinship networks on the family members' personal identities. Yet, he emphasises that the wider social processes of

inclusion and exclusion within a group (e.g. family) and/or between that group and others form the 'we' identities and the 'I' identities (ibid, p. 201).

Before the option of external candidates was discussed by the siblings, the boundaries were clearly delineated: Who are the owners and directors of the family business and who are not? Who is included in the family group? Although the senior managers were not family members, they had grown up and were nurtured within the family business. Over the years, they had been exposed to the commercial considerations of the business – decision making processes, conflict management and the feeling rules – as well as to the organisational and familial values, which Mead terms as the 'cult values' (1934). The stranger, who in the future could possibly be brought into the most senior managerial position of the family business, was possibly seen as a threat or as someone who could upset the distinct 'we' identity of the family. Moreover, he was seen as a threat, who could possibly discover hidden issues and even expose the inter-familial relationships that were not spoken about, and thus could potentially upset their unity. The disagreements between the siblings regarding the future succession steps for the business revealed the emotional tension that was developing between the brothers. Each one became sensitive and suspicious of the other's intentions and plans for their children. They were angry, pained and felt they were moving apart, as Ben said, when we met privately.

Brundin and Sharma (2012), who study family businesses, claim that family members (founders and following generations) 'often regard family business as "theirs" as much as their thoughts, words, and emotions' (ibid, p. 62). They experience a sense of oneness with their family business since their individual identity is closely intertwined with that of the company. The business becomes an extension of the 'self' and defines their identity. Such an imaginary sense of 'oneness' can lead to an emotional burden or, in their terms, 'emotional messiness' or to identity clashes when personal expectations and plans are not realised (ibid, p.57).

The siblings' sense of 'oneness' with the firm, as Brundin and Sharma (2012) describe, and their mutual commitment and loyalty to grow the family business, were seen, inter alia, in their joint decision-making and in a consensus on how the business should be managed. I

perceived their relationship as a harmonious one and they (and others) were proud to occasionally make implicit comments during our meetings, that they had successfully co-managed the company in harmony for many years. Examining the future continuity of the business, evoked an emotional crack or 'emotional messiness' (in Brundin and Sharma's terms, 2012) between the brothers which was experienced as a threat to the unity and identity of the family.

The significance of the familial identity can be understood when it is examined in the broader social context in which the siblings' family business operates. In Elias' terms, exploring social organisational phenomena from a long-term perspective, the 'airman' view, as introduced first in project 3, allows us to identify historical changes and the way we are forming and are formed by them, while not losing the view of a particular occurrence, the 'swimmer' view (Elias, 1987/2000, p. 47). Given that the described case occurs in Israel, reference to the broader social context of familism in Israeli society is unavoidable. Familism can be defined as the centrality of the family for the individual and the society (Fogiel-Bijaoui, 2005). Despite the far-reaching changes that have taken place in recent decades worldwide and in Israel, regarding the family structure (e.g., single parent families, same sex parents, living-apart-together families, cohabitation families), stability (e.g., the divorce rate is rising) and size (e.g., a decline in the average number of children), familism remains the identifying feature of Israeli society (Lavee and Katz, 2003). In comparison to the OECD industrialised nations, Israel is characterised by higher marriage rates, lower divorce rates and families have, on average, more children.

An additional feature to be noted is that although Israeli society is characterised by ethnic-cultural diversity, composed of a mix of Jewish, Muslim, Christian and Druze populations, the family entity remains relatively central and stable in each ethnic community, yet at a different pace and intensity. The value of the family is anchored in each community in defined codes, which form the individual's behaviour. Unlike the situation in Western industrialised countries, the processes that regulate marriage and divorce are subject to religious law in all the official religions in Israel. In each religion, the family unit constitutes a central and distinguishing marker for delineating the demographic makeup and the basis for forming and regulating a distinct ethnic-religious collective identity.

Fogiel-Bijaoui, an Israeli sociologist in the field of family studies, claims that 'most of Israel's citizens, both Jewish and Arab, see the personal status law as a crucial mechanism in the maintenance of their collective national group identities and the transmission of collective memory to future generations. These are of critical importance to both groups, Arabs and Jews, in a society in which the conflict between them remains unresolved' (Fogiel-Bijaoui and Rutlinger-Reiner, 2013, P. viii). Thus, the centrality of the family may be viewed as a collective and social commandment that is a deeply rooted in and integral part of Israelis' individual and collective identity. Drawing on Elias' perspective on identity formation, 'the family serves as a frame of reference for 'we-identity' and 'commands a fairly high emotive charge in its members' (Elias, 2001, P.203). I would add that the family functions as a setting to maintain and nurture the 'I-identity' and the 'we-identity' which are intertwined. Thus, as described above, managing a family business entails inherently emotional complexity, yet this complexity may be intensified when leading an Israeli family business, in which the value of the family is prominent. Moreover, a potential threat, conscious or unconscious, of dismantling the family business, may even be viewed as a failure in a society in which familism has a significant function in forming the individual and collective identity.

The question of the continuity of the family business, which is relevant for any organisation, takes on an extra, value laden and emotional meaning relating to maintaining the family's identity. This meaning may be consciously or unconsciously experienced. In Mead's terms, the value of family is part of the 'cult value' of Israeli society for all its various ethnic groups and it is put to the test regarding the extent of its functionality in particular situations (e.g., nominating a non-family member to lead a family business). The difficulty in implementing cult values in the everyday interactions between people derives from the different interpretations that people attribute to those values, which inevitably gives rise to conflicts. Mead's differentiation between cult values and functionalised values is helpful in understanding the conflict that arose between the siblings. The family's behavioural patterns such as avoiding confrontations (in public), coordinating the business and organisational decisions consensually, developing an internal cadre of managers and maintaining a long-term partnership can reflect the 'cult values' of the siblings while co-leading the family business. Yet, those values were put to the test in a functionalised

process (in Mead's terms), i.e. in a process which made the values concrete and particular, in the new phase of their family's life, which gave rise to a conflict. The idealised unity was splintered.

As a consultant, I am part of the broad Israeli collective. With retrospect, I am more aware of my high degree of sensitivity towards the value of the family and how this influenced the nature of my interventions. While the CEO recruitment process progressed and evoked emotional reactions between the siblings, I found myself getting even more involved because I was afraid that the process could harm the sibling relationship. From a more distanced view, I realise how much harder it was for me to be detached. Elias (1987) suggests that as human beings we are always involved and detached about the situations that we are engaged with, in some combination, according to the specific context. Mowles (2015), based on Elias' involvement – detachment formulation, argues that the more invested we are in a social occurrence ('the game of organisational life', *ibid*, p.60), in something that matters to us, the more our commitment may inhibit our ability to notice what happens and to be reflective. I would further question whether my strong attachment to the brothers' efforts to discuss issues related to the firm's future succession and their own relationships were a yearning on my part to belong to a 'happy, well-functioning' family.

In order to broaden my reflexivity regarding my high emotional involvement in the consulting process, I will 'take a detour via detachment' (in Elias' terms, 1987, p. 6), and make use of the concept of parallel processes.

Parallel processes in consulting processes

Observing the relationship between the siblings, and especially their difficulty to talk about the emotional aspects of the business succession and their children's integration into the firm, mirrored my own relationship with my sister and in particular, my difficulty to openly discuss sensitive issues regarding our relationships.

Writing the narrative and analysing the event from a more distant perspective, enabled me to understand the extent to which my sensitivity to the brothers' relationship was influenced by my own personal social family history. In addition, I came to understand the extent to which my ability to be reflective was both hindered and made possible by the past. The mirroring of the brothers' relationship in my relationship with my sister can be explained by the concept of 'parallel processes'.

In the clinical psychology literature, parallel processes are referred to as a 'reflection process' (Searles, 1955), 'mirroring', 'equivalence' (Hopper, 1996) or 'parallel re-enactment' (Morrissey and Tribe, 2001). A specific kind of relationship is re-enacted in another relationship or context (Clarkson, 1991). Clarkson (1991) suggests that parallel processes should be conceptualised as a way of describing the pattern of the client–therapist relationship that is replicated in the therapist-supervisor relationship. It is an unconscious process in which anxieties and fantasies are transferred from one relational setting to another. However, although this process is ascribed to the therapeutic realm, the transference also occurs as a phenomenon in other interpersonal dynamics and is not unique to the therapist-client relationship (Andersen and Przybylinski, 2012; Arnaud, 2017).

Parallel processes were originally thought to be unidirectional, starting from the therapeutic relationship between the client and therapist and then carried up through the transference process into the supervision/supervising relationship (Searles, 1955). Yet, it was eventually found that not only did the supervisee bring therapeutic dynamics 'up' into supervision, but that they also brought the supervisory relationship dynamics back 'down' into the therapy (Arnaud, 2017).

The unspoken, suppressed issues between the two brothers resonated with the unspoken conflicts with my own sister which I had avoided addressing over the years. This avoidance pattern contributed to the distance between us. Reflecting on our lifelong relationship, it seems that when we both met our life partners, we grew apart. Our loyalty to each of our new 'other' put the relationship we had previously to the test. These parallel processes demonstrate how we, as consultants, interact with our consultees from a biased and

emotional stance. In this narrative, the avoidance pattern between the siblings and my unconscious support of this pattern illustrates the parallel process.

In addition, reflecting on my relationship with my sister, and in parallel, on Abe and Ben's relationship, led me to examine the emotional complexity that arose when the brothers investigated the option of bringing the potential CEO into the fabric of the family business. Furthermore, it enabled me to understand how difficult it was for me to be reflective in the moment and to uncover the underlying feelings between the siblings. Looking back, and although this was never actually talked about, I can now understand the brothers' anxiety about bringing a 'stranger' into the family realm (which was only expressed explicitly by Abe), the potential threat to the dyadic relationship and the worry about a potential upset to the extended familial relationships.

I further question whether my involvement as an external consultant at this sensitive moment could be perceived by the brothers as trespassing the family boundaries. Suspending the recruiting process may be understood as an act of keeping the family boundaries closed by enacting the pattern of not talking about emotional issues that are not spoken about and even excluding me from this transition. This effect might have even been more amplified by the fact that at a certain point, my meetings were one sided, with only one of the brothers (Ben). This was a consulting decision that, in retrospect, evoked dilemmas about my sense of loyalty working with my clients.

Loyalty Consultant – Consultee(s): Further Dilemmas

Analysing the narrative, and drawing on my insights from the previous projects, strengthens my awareness that as a consultant, I approach the consulting processes with a set of values (such as the value of the family), past experiences and social predispositions, which are imprinted in me. As I described in project 1, my sense of loyalty to a greater cause (e.g., the State of Israel) and to other groups which I am part of (e.g., my family, professional groups) have formed who I am and have impacted the ways I observe and interpret the social processes in the organisations. Looking back on project 2, I understand that I attributed the mentor's resignation, at the end of the mentoring programme, as an act of disloyalty to the organisation and to her peers in the mentoring group, from a binary viewpoint (either you

are loyal or disloyal). I found it difficult to interpret her decision to leave as an act of being loyal to promoting gender equality in different ways (e.g., outside of the organisation). In reflecting on my experience in project 3, I realised that my aversion to trade unions and my belief that they hamper the employer/employee relationships and impair the mutual commitment and loyalty among them, impacted my tendency to side more with the management and less with the employees' perspectives. I also became more aware of my tendency to rate the competencies of those to whom I am loyal higher than the competencies of those to whom I do not feel attached. In the current project, consulting to the family business' owners, which inevitably involved relationships within the family, echoed my own family relational patterns, which impacted the way I observed and interpreted the siblings' relationships. I strived to help the siblings reduce their disagreements and prevent a potential conflict between them, with the assumption that a sense of loyalty means uniformity of opinions. This predisposition influenced my avoidance of opening up a confrontation, and even led me to be more cautious in my interventions. In hindsight, I was surprised that, despite my awareness of the binary tendency of being either loyal or disloyal to someone, it was difficult for me to escape from this inclination. I experienced my agreement to meet Ben alone at his request as an expression of disloyalty to Abe. I found it difficult to view my reaction as also being loyal to Ben who had asked to meet me for a consultation.

Drawing on these consulting experiences, I am now more aware that I am part of the dynamic relational processes. I am neither an objective observer, nor am I detached from the interplay of encounters with my clients. I am caught up in the clients' struggles dilemmas, intentions, and dreams, which resonate with mine. In my practice, I now pay more attention to the expressive emotions and how they can reveal patterns of relating among the involved parties (including myself the consultant). Being attentive to the explicit and implicit emotional reactions of my clients, not from an individual position, but rather as a relational process, enables me to encourage them to inquire into those feelings and reflectively explore their meanings.

To be loyal to my client means that I have to be aware of my taken-for-granted assumptions and values, and their effect on the consulting relationships. It means being in a continuous

self-reflective inquiry, while paying attention to how we are 'playing the game' together and mutually formed and being formed. Yet, since the consulting process occurs within the realm of the dynamic, evolving relationship with the client, loyalty in the consultant–consultee relationship means an ongoing mutual process of willingness and openness to engage in a reflective process.

The more I progressed in this study, the way I observed how people experience loyalty in different organisational settings changed. I had previously thought of loyalty as a positive virtue but over time I began to see the complexity of loyalty between people and between me and my clients. I used to think of loyalty as means for enabling harmonious relationships within the organisation and for strengthening the employees' attachment to the organisational vision, as well as assisting in employee retention.

I am now more aware of the experience of loyalty as a changing, complex relational process between people in an organisation. In my consulting practice, I used to aim to reduce disagreements and to consider conflicts (between employees and management, between members of a family-owned business) to be a source for undermining the sense of mutual loyalty. I am now more tolerant and curious about having a more pluralistic way of observing, and for a multi-perspective examination of the consulting processes, I am involved in. This pluralistic approach enables me (and others) to re-examine reflectively the consultant–consultee relationship, the mutual expectations, the constraints and enabling factors and whether to continue or terminate the joint work. Having a more critical approach in my practice (currently with a greater focus on self-criticism), is perceived as less judgmental, and more as an opportunity for a broader set of interpretations of given situations.

Being more aware of the change in my way of thinking and experiencing loyalty among people, I understand that the sense of loyalty between the consultant–consultee is an emerging process. At the start of the consulting relationship, the two are like 'strangers' who are getting to know each other and forming a working relationship. It is a mutual learning process while trying to understand the working perspectives of each other. In this sense, it is a movement between involvement and estrangement processes, or as Elias proposed, a shift of 'people's manifestations, such as patterns of speech or of thought, and

of other activities...' along a '...continuum that lies between these marginal poles of involvement and detachment' (Elias, 1956, pp. 226-227). I argue that the sense of loyalty is based on the ability and the freedom to move along the continuum of involvement and detachment, on the openness to examine additional interpretations without negating the existing perceptions or, as Elias argues, to become more involved about our detachment (Elias, 1987a), while recognising the shared goal. During the research period, together with my colleagues (of my learning set and the larger community), I gradually developed an increased awareness of my tendency to be highly involved and identified with my clients' dilemmas. A tendency which I have attributed to my high sense of loyalty towards them. Gaining a more detached involvement perspective during my research inquiry and in my practice has enabled me to be 'able to think about how we are thinking about how we are engaged' (Mowles, 2015, p. 60) and to invite my clients to reflect critically on their and our joint work.

By encouraging my consultees to reflect on their work processes, I could be viewed as an enabler but also as a threat, even if only in the short term, to the group 'we-ness' and there is a possibility that I could be excluded from the group. Loyalty to my client(s) is examined in my ability to voice an opinion that contradicts or criticises the ways members of the organisation operate and in certain circumstances, could lead to organisational changes. As a consultant, I am working within an emotional and conflictual realm, which challenges the sense of loyalty of the group's members to themselves and to me.

Moreover, loyalty to the client also means being aware of my abilities and limitations and of my consulting style (e.g., my tendency to have long-term relationships with my clients and avoiding confrontations). Loyalty in this sense means constantly and openly examining the advantages and constraints of these abilities and their relevancy to the specific client and the concrete consulting task. Moreover, it requires a readiness to seriously explore each consulting relationship, while on the one hand bearing in mind the uncertainty it entails, and on the other hand, the potential for development and growth together with the client.

Summary and Main Arguments

Writing the narrative on the family business and the reflective analysis enabled me to sharpen my view about organisations as an emotional arena. Family-owned businesses are

an extreme example of an emotionally laden working arena, since their members are related, and highly interdependent and have a strong identification with their joint enterprise, and loyalty to each other. An examination of the experience of loyalty among people within an emotional, organisational context reinforces how this experience has been portrayed in my earlier projects. There, I described loyalty as a relational process, in which a group of people are attached to and identify with others (a person or a group) or with a collective (values, causes). Loyalty to others is not only seen in bilateral relationships (e.g., Ben and Abe being loyal to each other) but also in multilateral ones, in which we are loyal to someone in relation to others (whether other individuals or groups). Being attached to diverse objects of loyalty, implies that it is not the object, but rather the kind of relationship (i.e., history, interests, expectations, emotions, power relations) that we are engaged in (Humphrey 2017, p. 400).

Nevertheless, reflecting on the dynamic and emotional relationships within a family-owned business, helps us understand more about the dialectic tension inherent in how loyalty is experienced: inclusion versus exclusion; stability and permanence versus temporariness; consensus versus change and renewal. These themes, all relevant to loyalty and disloyalty in relationships in any business, are magnified in their impact when people are related and interdependent.

Inclusion versus exclusion

As compared to other organisations, in the family business, the boundaries between family and non-family members are more distinct, and the test of who is included and who is excluded is seemingly clearer. The sense of loyalty between the siblings in the described event can be attributed to various factors (such as the high commitment to the father's legacy, the partnership in the success of the business, the 'we-ness' experience and broad agreements about how to run the business). Yet, the research literature on family businesses (e.g., Weiss, 2012), as well as the described narrative, indicate that non-family members experience a high sense of belonging and loyalty to the family business as well. Thus, the question of loyalty can be ascribed to which group we belong to or are excluded from, and not necessarily attributed to a blood relationship. The potential entry of the 'stranger' as the new CEO, who did not grow up in the family business, absorbing its culture,

can demonstrate the sense of threat to the 'we-identity'. The sense of loyalty to the 'we-ness' reinforces the experience of being part of a collective, but at the same time, delineates who is excluded.

Stability and permanence versus temporariness

In general, one of the characteristics seen in family businesses, when compared to other organisations, is long-term relationships with customers, employees, and consultants (Weiss, 2012), 'thinking in terms of generations' (Kets de Vries et al., 2007, p. 52). The sense of loyalty creates an imaginary sense of stability and permanence.

When the brothers discussed the continuity of the family business, they had to confront the fantasy of 'eternality'. These discussions highlighted the temporariness, dynamics, and changing of the organisational reality, which evoked feelings of anxiety and put the question of loyalty to the test. It raised conflicts of loyalty towards their children, the senior managers and towards their own relationship. The sense of loyalty generated an illusion of stability and continuity and reluctance to face transience.

Consensus versus change and renewal

The sense of loyalty can be understood as a process in which the members of the group strive to maintain broad agreement and consensus on the character of the business and its cult values, the ways the work is done and who is included or excluded. The discussion between Abe and Ben about whether to promote a senior manager, who had risen up the ranks in the business and had become 'like a family member', or whether to recruit an external candidate, sharpened the conflict of continuity and conserving the current state of how the business is managed versus the option of change and renewal. By bringing someone in from the outside there was a potential 'danger' of upsetting the *status quo*. The sense of loyalty was experienced in light of the tension between seeking to preserve the present state and simultaneously recognising the need for change and renewal.

Inquiring into the conflicts that the family business' owners experienced regarding the continuity of the business, reveals an additional aspect about the complexity of the sense of loyalty in this kind of business. Family loyalty is perceived and described by scholars from

different disciplines (sociologists as Connor, 2007; philosophers as Kleinig, 2014 and family therapists as Doherty, 1999) as a primordial relationship of humans, notwithstanding the controversial and problematic definition of a family in the modern era (Connor, 2007). Elias (2001), from an historical sociological perspective, describes the family group as the primary, indispensable survival unit for individuals and argues that although, in more recent times, the state has taken over some of the roles of the primary survival unit, yet the family function has not disappeared, especially for children (ibid, p. 203). Acknowledging the primacy of a parent-child bond in family loyalty, parental loyalty is so taken for granted and portrayed as unbreakable, unconditional and preferential (Doherty 1999). Viewing the family as the strongest form of loyalty, ignores the complexity of relations within family settings, and the diversity of how family loyalty is experienced and expressed among the family members (Kleinig, 2014, pp. 167-168).

When I began my consulting work with the siblings, I viewed them as a cohesive unit and was cautious not to harm these harmonious relationships. I now understand this as the way in which I idealised the value of the family. The perception of loyalty to the family, and in particular the parent-child loyalty 'which is as close to a universal moral norm' (Doherty, 1999, p. 4) is associated, consciously or subconsciously, to the sense of loyalty in a family-owned business. Although there is a clear distinction in the family-owned business between who is a family member and who is not included, nevertheless, expressions of loyalty vary. Members of the firm, 'like family members' may show a high level of identification with and loyalty to the business (e.g. long-term employment), yet on the other hand, family members may decide to leave the business or the founder/parent may decide not to pass on the management of the business to their child. Thus, consulting to organisations in general, and to family-owned businesses in particular, requires the consultant to regularly challenge the associative connections he/she makes and to examine their relevance to the specific context.

In addition, researching a family-owned business, through the prism of loyalty, has made me more aware of the multiple facets of the sense of loyalty, which is not a fixed process, but rather a transformative one. The sense of loyalty was experienced by the brothers in different ways and towards different loyalty objects (e.g. children, senior managers, the

founding father's legacy, the continuity of the business) which inevitably evoked a conflict about these loyalties.

Family-owned businesses play a dominant role in the worldwide economy and the fact that they are so prominent and survive over time, together with their owners' long-term orientation, could indicate the strong human need for survival and continuity. This does not in any way lessen the importance of other considerations, such as finance, power, and influence. Even though the family as a unit has changed over time, worrying about the continuity of the family-owned business could also be a way in which the family members express their mutual need and aspirations to preserve and nurture the sense of familism. Loyalty in a family-owned business may be seen as a means of reinforcing the relationships between the family members and may serve as an anchor for maintaining this unit or, for aspiring to maintain these as a close unit.

Synopsis of Research

Introduction

In this thesis, I have explored the experience of loyalty as manifested in the interpersonal interactions in diverse organisational situations in which I am involved as an organisational consultant. In my inquiry I paid particular attention to the experiences of participants (including myself) involved in breakdown events when we (or they) were faced with questions regarding the complexity of loyalty and disloyalty.

The complete thesis comprises four projects (which appear in the previous chapters as they were originally written, so that the development of my thinking during the doctorate is shown), and a synopsis, which aims to describe my theme and the main arguments as they have emerged in the process of the research. The synopsis includes a summary of the key ideas in each project and a further reflexive turn, which was developed after having written and reflectively analysed the four projects. The process of re-reading and critically reviewing the four projects has enabled me to formulate the final arguments of this research and to demonstrate movement in my own thinking. I conclude with my understanding of the contributions that my research make to knowledge and practice and then I present ideas for further research on the theme of loyalty.

After explaining the theme, in the next section I offer a brief description of the perspective of complex responsive processes of relating and continue with a methodological explanation of how I have conducted my research, followed by findings and contributions to knowledge and practice.

Research Theme

The issues involved in employees' loyalty and mutual commitment have engaged me up to the present in my practice and have become even more challenging and puzzling due to the exponential changes in the workplace in recent decades. The fundamental shifts have reshaped the relationship, the inter-dependency, the mutual commitment and the sense of loyalty between the employees and the organisation (Schwartz et al, 2019; Störmer et al, 2014; Johnson, 2005; Deloitte, 2019). These evolving changes have evoked thinking about

the following aspects of the experience of loyalty: How do employees experience loyalty and conflicting loyalties at work? How are the experiences of loyalty and disloyalty expressed in the day-to-day interactions among the members of the organisation? As an organisational consultant where do my loyalties lie in organisational encounters, when taking into account the various interests and agendas involved? How does a consultant and/or anyone involved in the organisational activity not lose touch with their own voice in situations in which they are pushed to show loyalty to one side?

My key research questions are:

What does loyalty mean to different people in different organisational contexts? What happens when people are loyal or disloyal in their interactions? What are the implications for consultancy?

To understand the theoretical and methodological perspectives that form the basis of this study, I begin with a brief description of the complex responsive processes of relating perspective, as it has had a significant influence on the way I have developed my arguments and then continue with a methodological explanation of how I have conducted my research.

[The DMan Programme: Research Theoretical and Methodological Framework](#) [Theoretical Framework Overview](#)

Complex responsive processes of relating is a perspective of human action, developed by Ralph Stacey, Doug Griffin and Patricia Shaw and later by Christopher Mowles and faculty colleagues at the University of Hertfordshire, in an attempt to explore what people do in organisations when they are working together, and how they make sense of what they are doing (Stacey, Griffin and Shaw, 2000; Stacey and Mowles, 2016). This inter-disciplinary perspective is informed by insights mainly from the complexity sciences, pragmatic philosophers (such as George H. Mead and John Dewey), the process sociology (e.g., Norbert Elias) and from group analytic theories as described by Foulkes (cited by Stacey and Griffin, 2005; Mowles 2017, p. 7). The perspective of the complex responsive processes of relating presents an alternative social approach which differs radically from the dominant management theories that are based on the systems thinking approach.

According to systems theories (e.g., systems dynamics theories), organisations are systems which are composed of subsystems that affect each other. Human organisations have clear boundaries with their environment and strive to adapt to the external changing conditions in order to achieve stability, alignment and consistency (Stacey and Mowles, 2016, pp. 102-103, 106). Gaps between environmental conditions and the internal state of the system trigger changes toward an equilibrium (Stacey, Griffin, Show, 2000). Accordingly, organisations may be 'thought to be governed by efficient causality' (ibid, p. 56), based on feedback processes and rules which govern the way the parts interact. They can also be seen as machines that function to achieve the chosen goals which are defined by their leaders. In order to obtain these goals in the most efficient way, and to maintain the internal order within the system, efforts are made to enhance clarity of roles and task definitions and to ascribe the controlling role to the managers. The underlying assumption of many of those who rely on systems theories is that the future can be predicted and controlled by someone (e.g., managers). Human action, by its nature, is understood in this way of thinking in a deterministic view, in which fixed laws connect certain actions to certain consequences (Stacey and Mowles, 2016, p. 239).

The system thinking theories 'apply the method of natural science to human action' (Stacey, Griffin, Show, 2000, p. 56). The person who is researching the organisation, like the natural scientist, positions him/herself outside of the occurrences within the human organisation, and strives to understand them in systemic terms, focusing on the interaction of the parts. According to the systems theories, the managers are objective observers who ought to design the whole system and the guiding rules of interactions between the organisational parts and its members. The systems thinking theories 'provide powerful ways of thinking about, and designing means of securing, organizational stability and continuity and.... unfolding potential change already enfolded in the system' (ibid, p. 59). Yet, in many cases, systems theories become so abstract that they have difficulty in explaining 'the role of ordinary human freedom and the closely related possibility of transformative change' (ibid). In a critique of systems thinking, Stacey and colleagues point to a number of failings and major problems embedded in the systems thinking theories: managers and researchers are part of the organisations, participating in the human interactions and as such cannot be

objective observers like the natural scientist, even though they act as if they can be. Moreover, placing human freedom entirely in the hands of the managers (e.g., designing the system and its rules, defining the goals) 'reduces other members of the organisation to inhuman parts without freedom' (ibid, p. 58). The split between manager and other organisational members inevitably leads to the view of an organisation as a mechanism or system which cannot explain the nature of ordinary everyday human freedom.

My OD consulting work was based on assumptions rooted in systems theories (as described in project 1). I adopted the position of an external observer, believing that it would enable me to understand the dynamic relations among the members of the organisation from an objective prism. I aspired to diagnose the gaps between the organisational external environmental conditions and the internal subsystems (e.g., organisational structure and culture, strategic goals, leadership style) and to propose various suggestions for interventions. As I accumulated more professional experience and was exposed to new ways of exploring the working organisation, I became aware of the constraints of the systems thinking approach: the assumption that there is an optimal state that can produce the most efficient outcomes by members of the organisation is a naïve expectation that fails to be fulfilled as planned in a turbulent, changing world; the underlying idea that only the managers have the freedom to choose the goals and design the processes and principles that the members of the organisation have to conform to in order to attain the goals - ignores the ordinary everyday choices and activities that people are making while working together and coping with unexpected circumstances; and that systems theory does not provide an answer to how people actually cope with uncertainty, conflicts and novelty.

As opposed to systems theories, Stacey, influenced by the pragmatism of Mead (1934) and the process sociology of Elias (2000, 2001), claims that organisations are understood in terms of social interactive processes between humans, who do not form systems. They are complex, never in equilibrium, but instead are composed of endless local, changeable patterns that people create in practice and from which global organisational patterns emerge.

Taking up insights from the complexity sciences (e.g., the complex adaptive systems theory), thinking by analogy, is a source for understanding the complex social processes in organizations. A complex adaptive system (CAS) is 'an agent-based computer programme... which is 'helpful for thinking about phenomena in the natural world which involve many interacting 'agents' (ant colonies, neurones in the human brain)' (Mowles, 2022, p.19) while patterns of activity emerge.

CAS theory attempts to model complexity by seeking to identify common features of the dynamics of systems. Accordingly, a system is formed by a large number of individual agents, who interact with, and adapt to each other (Stacey and Mowles, 2016). The local interactions among individual agents are not governed by centralised rules, but rather, 'agents interact locally'... 'in the absence of an overall blueprint for the whole system they form' ... in 'a self-organising interaction that produces an emergent population-wide pattern' (ibid, p. 248). The 'whole', the system, does not exist until it has emerged and since it is always in an evolving process, it is never in a steady state (ibid, p. 323).

The insights we can gain from complex adaptive systems (CAS) thinking do indeed contribute to understanding the complexity of the human phenomenon. Insights such as an understanding that human organisations never reach a state of equilibrium, that stability and change are inseparable, that relational patterns are predictable and unpredictable at the same time, that we place mutual constraints one on each other in order to achieve social routine, and that local activity forms global patterns while at the same time global patterns produce local ones. However, although there are a variety of ways to model complex behaviour by computerised simulations, nevertheless translating these into actual social life has limited application, since they do not capture the complexity of the lived reality (ibid).

CAS computer programmes, 'inevitably carry with them simplifying assumptions about the world' (Mowles, 2022, p. 27). CAS theory assumes that each agent follows the same (small) number of simple deterministic local rules to function and that no 'learning' takes place. Thus, there is no historical context to the agents' functioning, as there is to human beings in their social life (ibid). Furthermore, the programmer who runs the simulations, takes the

position of an external objective observer, who stands 'outside' the interaction(s) without being affected by it. Considering the manager as a parallel function of the programmer is inappropriate in human responsive processes, since we are all participants in those interactions. Thus, complex adaptive systems theory can provide an analogy for provoking thinking about human interactions, yet it is required to be cautious about its limitations to reflect the diversity, complexity and contextuality of the social world.

The perspective of complex responsive processes of relating proposes an alternative way to view human behaviour and how it is manifested in organisations. In this perspective, an organisation 'arises purely out of the activities, intentions, idealisations and the attempts to make meaning of the many employees who join together with the intention of achieving something collectively.' (Mowles, 2011, p. 62). The perspective assumes that human relationships are formed by communicative interactions of gestures and responses, followed by further gestures and responses. This is an experience in which meanings that are based on our histories and habits evolve as we interact with each other (Mead, 1934). We, as individuals, are social from the very development of our self-consciousness, and are forming and being formed by the society that we are part of (Elias, 1978). Being exposed to the perspective of the complex responsive processes of relating has significantly influenced my view of organisations. I now see them as a constant interweaving of people's intentions and activities which reflect power relations while they jointly strive to achieve their goals. I currently perceive organisations not as static systems, which are self-regulating, but rather as local human interactions (e.g., talks, discussions, writing to each other, gesturing and responding to each other) from which global human patterning arises.

The question of employee loyalty to the organisation, of mutual loyalty among team members and of my loyalty as an organisational consultant has concerned me throughout my career as a HR manager and an organisational consultant. This question arose as a central theme while writing my first project in this study – a critical and reflective autobiography. The introspective writing enabled me to understand the extent to which the importance of loyalty to family, friends, organisation and society is deeply embedded in me as a value and how I tried to implement it in my professional practice. I will expand on this point later in the reflexive turn on Project 1.

Engaging with the perspective of complex responsive processes led me to explore loyalty from a different point of view than the more commonly accepted discourse in management studies. A majority view of the management literature covering the subject of loyalty focuses on customer loyalty (to a product, service or brand). These studies aim to understand how to increase such loyalty as if it were a commodity (e.g., Moretta Tartaglione et al., 2019). With reference to employee loyalty, the literature in organisational studies focuses mainly on the individual perspective, i.e. how the individual experiences and expresses their loyalty (e.g., Coughlan, 2005; Royce, 1908) or on the functional aspects of loyalty, such as employee retention (Reichheld, 2001; Smith and Rupp, 2002; Aityan and Gupta, 2012). The management literature tends to portray loyalty in a causal, binary way (e.g., Powers, 2000); for example, looking at either exit reflecting disloyalty, or voice showing loyalty (Hirschman, 1970). The literature on organisational consulting addresses loyalty almost solely within the context of ethical constraints (such as client-consultant confidentiality). With the complexity view of management, my aim in this research is to further explore the theme of loyalty from the process sociology perspective, taking into account the social (relational) aspects of loyalty as experienced by various players in the organisation (including employees, managers and consultants).

Research Methodological Framework

Based on the perception that organisations are viewed as paradoxical patterns of local and global interaction between people, the DMan students (practitioners from diverse disciplines, managers and consultants) are directed to give an account of their own everyday work experiences, with the aim of reflexively exploring them (Stacey and Mowles, 2016, p. 509).

The DMan's research method is different from the inquiry methodology I was accustomed to in my practice as an organisational consultant. Drawing on the Organisational Development (OD) perspective (Schein, 1969), which guided my consulting work, I would collect data in response to a pre-defined problem or particular needs within the organisation. I collected data mainly through in-depth interviews, based on Nadler's data collection/feedback cycle model (1977, pp.42-44), which comprises five stages: planning,

collecting and analysing data, feedback and follow-up. Those interviews were designed to uncover the gaps between a desired organisational situation and the existing one. As an external consultant, I tried to act as an objective inquirer in an attempt to better understand the problem and to propose alternative solutions.

The emphasis of the DMan programme is on inquiry into the researcher's practice and the relationships with those at work, based on the notion that: 'One can only really understand an organisation from within the local interaction in which global tendencies to act are taken up' (Stacey and Griffin, 2005, p. 9). This means that as an inquirer, I am not an external, objective observer of the object of my research. I approach my research with my history and groups' previous experiences influencing me, or as Dewey argues: 'We do not approach any problem with a wholly naïve or virgin mind; we approach it with certain acquired habitual modes of understanding, with a certain store of previously evolved meanings, or at least of experiences from which meanings may be educed' (1910, p. 106). Being aware of some of my biases, I am working towards an impartial account as far as possible. My inquiry involves self-narratives about my practice and an exploration of the relationships between people I work with, in order to find social patterns that reflect more generalisable patterns. As opposed to interviewing people to reflect on their work in a way that is separated from actually doing it, the self-narrative inquiry methodology places my research within the tradition of autoethnography.

[Collaborative Autoethnography](#)

Autoethnography is an 'approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)' (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 273). It is a research method which combines characteristics of autobiography and ethnography (Ellis et al, 2010, p.3). Whereas autobiography is the story that the author retroactively and selectively writes about past experiences, ethnography is a way to study relational practices, common and divergent values, beliefs, and shared experiences within cultural groups. Ethnographers study the cultural characteristics of a group or community (such as language, ceremonies, texts, and symbols) by providing a 'thick description' and analysis of the meanings that people

attribute to those symbols (Geertz, 1973). In my consultancy practice, I work mainly with teams of managers who lead global companies which have their HQ located in Israel.

Autoethnography is a research approach which describes and reflexively analyses a particular group or organisation, in which the relationship between the researcher and the researched forms a significant part of the study (Lapadat, 2017). It is designed to understand the broader cultural context of those experiences (Ellis, 2007; Ellis et al, 2010). The 'auto' part of the autoethnography research method does not mean that as the researcher I am the key actor in terms of understanding the relationships between the involved people. Rather, it means that I am the one who has the best access to my own practice, who can best inquire into my role in the research and the impact that I have on what happened in terms of the way I am thinking and feeling and the way I bring my own history into the encounters. The 'auto' part also requires me to be reflexive, a process which I will elaborate on later.

Like most autoethnographic research, my research includes narratives which are not written from the perspective of an external observer, but rather they are descriptions of my experience, the situations I am part of and the sense I am striving to make of them. This research approach is different from my consultancy practice. As a consultant, who has mainly worked with multicultural and multidisciplinary teams of managers, I have adopted a social ethnographical approach, studying the groups' cultural differences, their diverse values and ways of working. I have positioned myself as an 'outsider' to the groups' dynamics, interests and preferences and have attempted to suppress my feelings or predispositions.

The main difference between the DMan research method and autoethnographic forms is that the former is *always* a collaborative and reflexive inquiry, constantly testing out interpretations within a community of inquirers to assess resonance and rigour (Stacey and Griffin, 2005), a research setting which I will expand on later. In contrast, autoethnographic research usually involves studying other people, but usually the ethnographer writes the study on his/her own (Lapadat, 2017). Yet, in cases when it takes a form of a collaborative autoethnographic research, it is often described as involving of two or more researchers,

who contribute to the research with data generation, analysis, inquiry and writing together. The researchers are co-authors of the research (Lapadat, 2017, p. 597).

The DMan's way of doing a collaborative autoethnography means that as a researcher, I have received comments and questions, shared thoughts and discussed my narratives, reflections and analyses with my learning set and colleagues of the wider DMan community. This kind of collaborative research enables me to gain on one hand multi-dimensional perspectives and on the other hand to obtain a degree of detachment, to go beyond a subjective account and work towards objectivity, even if absolute objective truth remains elusive.

The main criticism of the autoethnographic research method, as well as that of the DMan programme, is that it relies heavily on particular, subjective narratives, which give rise to questions about whether these narratives can contribute to understanding practice more generally. The critics also argue that a researcher's high degree of involvement in the described narrative, either as the object or as an active participant of the research, or most often both, prevents the detachment that is necessary to explore and interpret those human phenomena and the dynamic relations. Taking into account that as researchers we are participants and observers at the same time, Stacey and Griffin (2005) argue that 'there can be no objective validity for the obvious reason that the research is an interpretation, a subjective reflection on personal experience. However, it is not any arbitrary account in that it must make sense to others, resonate with the experience of others and be persuasive to them' (p. 27). Mowles, drawing on Hegel's insight about consciousness, claims that as humans we can both think, and think about ourselves thinking, being both the subject and the object of our own thinking (2015, pp 27-28). Thus, although objective validity is unattainable in the sense meant by positivist science, the pragmatist idea of objectivity, where as a researcher I offer an account that resonates with others beyond my own subjective view, has guided my research and ensured a high standard of rigour (e.g., choosing narratives which resonate with others and providing thick descriptions of the occurrences). So, our aspiration for objectivity about social phenomena can be understood as a process instead of a position.

As a researcher, as well as a consultant, I am a co-contributor to the processes I am involved in. 'Paying attention to my own part in the interactions, in which I am participating, taking my own experience seriously, I am also able to say something about the patterning which I am forming, and which is forming me' (Mowles, 2011, p. 86). Nevertheless, I cannot maintain complete detachment from the events I am inquiring into. Being part of the DMan programme community, I am required to justify my account 'in terms of a wider tradition of thought that the community being addressed finds persuasive, or at least plausible' (Stacey and Griffin, 2005, p. 27). Further on in this thesis, I will expand on the involvement of the learning set and the wider research community in my research.

Narrative Inquiry

This autoethnographic approach relies on narrative inquiry as well. My research as part of my doctoral studies in the DMan programme includes narratives that describe my own experience at work.

Narrative inquiry has become a prevalent field in contemporary social sciences, 'an interdisciplinary practice that cuts across the arts, humanities, sciences and social sciences' (Andrews et al., 2004, p. 20). Narrative inquiry is a method aimed at making sense of social life (Czarniawska, 2004, p. 11) by capturing complex and nuanced understandings of people's experiences over time (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005), while taking account of the relationship between the individual experience and the cultural context (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Bruner (1991) argues that people organise their experience and memory of human happenings mainly in the form of narratives (p. 4), which provide coherence and sense to their experiences and have a central role in their communication with others (Lieblich, et al., 1998, p. 7).

The human stories that we tell and listen to have a close connection with who we are. 'Our stories are the cornerstone of our identities'....yet, 'they are not and can never be wholly personal' (Andrews et al., 2004, pp. 10-11). The way we perceive the reality, construct, comprehend, explain and re-narrate our own experiences carries associations of memories and 'storylines which are already 'out there'' (ibid). Although the narratives that we tell are indeed particular and tied to specific conditions, yet they are contextual and connected to

certain historical and social circumstances. As researchers, we have to introduce readers to the relevant background aspects that will enable them to deepen their understanding of the narratives being researched.

Narrative analysis, for Andrews and colleagues (2004) 'is not only a way of finding out about how people frame, remember and report their experiences', but ... 'a way of generating knowledge, that disrupts old certainties and allows us to glimpse something of the complexities of human lives, selves and endeavours' (p. 20), not only from individual's point of view, but also to understand broader social phenomena.

Thus, the narratives in this research serve as the resources (Squire, et al., 2014), 'raw material', not in the traditional way of collecting data, but rather as data which I have selected to describe a problem or a 'breakdown' (Brinkmann, 2012, pp. 12–13), while working as an OD consultant.

The narratives of projects 2, 3 and 4 of this research are the starting point of my inquiry and provide the preliminary data for analysis. Each narrative is a piece of history in which I describe the unfolding of a mixture of interactions, events, exchanges between people, where there is some significant breakdown, disruption or unexpected reactions.

Breakdowns are described as situations in which there is a discrepancy between our expectations about the social reality and our actual experiences; they give rise to surprise, astonishment, mystery (Brinkmann, 2014, p.722) and can serve as an impetus for qualitative inquiries (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2011). The female mentors' breakdown experience (as described in project 2) can illustrate how it turned into a catalyst for further inquiry and action. As the female senior managers were training to become mentors, they became more aware of the dissonance between the declared policy of gender equality and the everyday practices in the organisation. This breakdown served as an opportunity for them to talk among themselves about their feelings and to reflect on the routine processes that perpetuate gender inequality.

A breakdown-driven inquiry, according to Brinkmann, is 'a form of reasoning that is concerned with the relationship between a situation and inquiry. It is neither data-driven

nor theory-driven' (2014, p. 723). In other words, it is neither an inductive form of research (i.e., analysing data that enables us to reach explanations and conclusions which are generalisable) nor a deductive form of analysis (i.e., examining and validating a theory through data analysis) but rather an abductive approach. Thus, abduction is driven by breakdowns, in which we need to find alternative explanations to understand the puzzling and perplexing situations we experience (Brinkmann, 2012, p. 46). In such a study, the researcher's conclusions provide plausible explanations for the inquired problem(s), or 'warranted assertions' in Dewey's terms (as cited in Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 2), rather than universal explanations of truth. The researcher offers provisional understandings of the problematic situations that were examined, which remain open for further exploration in the future.

Reflection and Reflexivity

Narratives are not only descriptions of episodes in a social context, but also articulations of our reflections on experiences (Stacey and Mowles, 2016, p. 435) that enable the researcher(s) to develop self-awareness and to make sense of their thoughts, feelings and responses (Lieblich, 2015). Mowles (2015) distinguishes between reflection and reflexivity as two separate, yet connected, activities. 'Where reflection is the ability to detach oneself from our involvement', reflexivity is 'where we are able to think about how we are thinking about how we are engaged' (ibid, p.60). In the DMan programme, the researcher is encouraged to become reflexive. Critiques and debates in the research community enhance this ability through the invitation to question our taken-for-granted assumptions and propose alternative perspectives to explore and make sense of our experience.

Although no one can step outside of his/her interaction with others, writing and re-writing the narratives, and sharing and discussing them with my learning set colleagues, have been essential, and a significant step in my becoming more reflexive about my work. The discussions with my learning set colleagues on my work in an iterative process have enabled me to take 'a detour via detachment' (in Elias's terms, 1987, p. 6), have drawn my attention to my own ways of thinking – allowing me to question my taken-for-granted assumptions – and provided richer and additional perspectives in making sense of my own experiences.

Reading extensive literature from different disciplines, as suggested by Alvesson and Sköldbreg (2009, p. 271-280), has been a helpful in increasing my ability to be reflexive by inquiring into the narratives from a more detached and critical point of view. Reading literature related to the complex responsive processes of relating perspective, as well as literature relevant to my particular narrative accounts (on themes such as loyalty, gender at the workplace, leading change, power relations in organisations and critical thinking), has enriched my breadth of interpretations. It has enabled me to make sense of what I and others experienced in a range of organisational and social settings.

Reflexivity within the context of the DMan program is simultaneously an individual process, since the narrator is making sense of his/her own way of thinking in the story's construction and the sole author of the final thesis (e.g., selecting particular events) but it is, at the same time, a social one, since it is an iterative researching process within a group when developing ideas (Stacey and Griffin, 2005, p. 22) involving the learning set and the wider DMan community colleagues. The researchers themselves are taking account of social aspects (e.g. the traditions of thought of the narrator's society).

Looking back reflexively on how my understanding of the research method has developed, I understand that research, like the consulting practice, are both ongoing learning processes. Drawing on Dewey's perspective on education that 'we learn by doing' (1916, p. 184) and that research is a form of education, I realised that an inquiry is a process of learning in the pragmatist way of thinking. For instance, in project 3, while I became more aware of my negative approach to labour unions and to my tendency to take the management's side, I chose to talk to people who relate to the union's activities as a way of obtaining different points of view. These were not interviews in the conventional way of collecting data, but rather an attempt to test my own assumptions, in a pragmatist way, looking for plural perspectives.

Thus, the research process, as well as my consulting practices are educational processes, not in the meaning of acquiring knowledge, but education in the sense of deepening my understanding of the world and an ongoing questioning of my own ways of thinking.

Community of Inquiry

Being part of the DMan programme means that I am a member of a research community, as well as part of a learning set. The learning set, as mentioned above, is composed of up to four students at different stages of their research and a first supervisor, all of whom read and comment upon each other's work. Being a member of a research community, composed of five learning sets altogether, means that I am also part of a group whose members have a history, work patterns and mutual expectations to attend the periodical meetings and to contribute their knowledge and experience.

The changing composition of the learning set members shapes the dynamic of its relationships. As a new member of the team, I had to learn the overt rules of the game (such as when and how to comment on my learning set colleagues' work), but I also had to try and uncover the covert rules. Later, as a senior member of the set, towards the end of the programme, I felt that I have become the bearer of the learning set's history and working patterns. I also had a sense of responsibility to support the new colleagues' onboarding into the teamwork, on the one hand, and on the other hand, attempted not to be restricted by the old habits.

Each participating researcher attends four, 4-day residential units a year. This allows for everyone to be exposed to and discuss theoretical concepts, to present his/her work, meet in learning sets and to take part in experiential group sessions, called 'community meetings' (Mowles 2017, p 8). These sessions do not have a pre-defined agenda (based on the Group Analysis practice developed by Foulkes, [1964]). The conversations which arise during the community meetings serve as a starting point for reflection and for paying attention to themes and questions relevant to our practice and that are the focus of our research. The DMan learning set meets during the residential meetings and at virtual ones six weeks after the residential. All these meetings aim to discuss and support each student as to how to proceed with his/her research work, as well to discuss our joint working. Due to the Covid 19 pandemic, my last five residential meetings have been virtual. This new experience has illustrated the constraints, as well as the enabling aspects: the research community did not suspend its work, but took it as an opportunity to explore new ways to achieve joint

collaboration. Yet it restricted the informal social interactions and especially opportunities for developing informal but intense relationships with the programme's newcomers. The learning set and the community colleagues have been essential in my becoming more reflexive about my work. They have enabled me to draw attention to my ways of thinking, questioning my taken-for-granted assumptions and providing richer and additional perspectives in making sense of my own experiences.

The DMan thesis consists of four projects, followed by a synopsis. Project one is an experiential autobiography, in which the researchers are invited to describe formative experiences, events and groups that they have been part of, as well as traditions of thought which have shaped their practice and the ways they make sense of them (Mowles, 2017, p. 12). The process of writing my project 1, which involved several iterative versions and discussions with my supervisors and my learning set colleagues, helped me to become aware of the values and the taken-for-granted assumptions that have guided my practice.

My main research question continuously emerges in this thesis as the inquiry develops through three additional projects, each one beginning with a narrative describing a specific breakdown in practice. Interpretations and attempts to make sense of what was happening involve an iterative, collaborative, and reflexive inquiry (Stacey and Griffin, 2005), discussions with my learning set and drawing on relevant organisational and sociological theories to detect patterns and new perspectives in the research (Mowles, 2017, p.7). Although the narratives described in my research are specific and context sensitive, they raise questions about the broad theme of loyalty, which are generalisable and relevant to other organisational consultants, as well as to wider communities (e.g., managers, HR practitioners). My learning set in particular, and the wider research community of the DMan programme in general, play a crucial role in examining whether my narratives and arguments resonate and seem plausible to them and whether they are likely to be so for others.

While working on this thesis, I spoke to some of the individuals who feature in my narratives after I wrote them and together we explored my observations and interpretations in an attempt to examine their perspectives, as well as to expand my points of view on the

subjects and issues that arose in the narratives, such as: gender bias in organisations; labour unions; family businesses. For example, in project 3, which discusses the breakdown in trust between the management and employees, I spoke to several people who are involved with labour union relations such as a labour court judge, a labour relations lawyer, a HR manager, a labour union representative and an academic researcher. These conversations helped me see multiple points of view about the relationships between management, employees and labour unions and to examine dilemmas connected to this triad. When I was trying to understand the complexity of relationships within a family business, during project 4, I spoke to various stakeholders such as owners, board members, owner-managers of a family business, and CEOs who are not family members. These discussions enabled me to understand the inherent complexity of managing such businesses, as well as the emotional dilemmas of decision making at critical junctions such as the succession of leadership in the business.

The research methodology that forms the basis of this study is not free of limitations and ethical dilemmas, an issue common to all social research. Before continuing with an additional reflective analysis of the projects that comprise my research, I discuss these research limitations and how I tried to mitigate them.

Research limitations

My research methodology is based on the assumption that the way to learn about and understand one's life in the social world is by 'a research process, a hermeneutic process of inquiry' into our everyday life experiences (at home or work), 'which make it impossible to draw a line between 'doing research' and 'being alive' (Brinkman, 2012, p. 6). Thus, in order to understand his/her practice, the researcher is required to explore and interpret the experiences he or she as a practitioner is involved in and, in particular, to explore those problems or disruptions that concern him or her. Using narratives, as the data for conducting research, raises the question of whether emotionally-laden, personal narratives are sufficiently 'objective' to form the basis for analysing organisational occurrences. Does the fact that these are personal stories not make it difficult for them to expose the actual

reality? Are the narrators not too 'forgiving' in their description of the event as it truly occurred?

When writing the narratives, the challenge I faced was on the one hand, to be sufficiently detached from the emotional experience, I was analysing, and yet on the other hand, to be sufficiently open to explore, to reveal and to deal with the 'blind spots' in my descriptions, even though it was difficult for me to take a critical view. Going through several iterations, as part of the narrative inquiry, helped me gain a detached stance, yet there was a risk that the occurrence I was analysing, was becoming distanced from the original experience.

This research methodology raises an additional difficulty: To what extent can the particular event that I selected be generalised so that it tells us something about the broader social pattern that resonates with the experiences of others? Drawing on the perspective of complex responsive process of relating, the researcher's task is to explore the particular episode, and yet to connect it to general experiences. Exploring the siblings' emotional experiences (in project 4) as they examined the business future succession's options was portrayed as a particular case, yet I researched the experience within broader and more general contexts, such as: the role of family businesses in western society and economies and the complexity of involving external consultants in family businesses. Examining family businesses as a unique organisational configuration, from both the perspective of the 'swimmer' (the concrete manifestation) and the 'airman' (the broader context) in Elias' terms (2001), deepens the understanding of the organisational complexity of such a business. Furthermore, being part of a community of inquirers, the learning set and the wider DMan community, played a significant role in testing whether my research narratives resonate with their experiences. The diverse professional and cultural background of my research colleagues and the ongoing discussions on ethical research dilemmas helped in exploring the broader context of our individual experiences and the resonance and plausibility of my inquired accounts.

Moreover, the autoethnography research method that is based on the 'analysis of a personal narrative' is criticised for being 'limited in its conclusions' (Méndez, 2013, p. 282), since it provides plausible, rather than universal, explanations of truth. In Dewey's terms,

our research's conclusions are 'warranted assertions', 'outcomes of inquiry that are so settled that we are ready to act upon them, yet remain always open to be changed in the future' (Martela, 2015, p.540). Thus, my research conclusions, in keeping with the pragmatic thinking approach, are temporary, provisional, never as fixed and given (Dewey, 1938, p. 112) and even open for further inquiry in the future.

Research Ethics

Ethical dilemmas arise in qualitative research in general, and in autoethnographic research in particular, because of 'the complexities of researching private lives and placing accounts in the public arena' ... complexities which 'cannot be solved solely by the application of abstract rules, principles or guidelines' (Birch, Miller, Mauthner & Jessop, 2012, p.1). Birch et al. argue that standard ethical guiding principles, such as protection, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity are static, increasingly formalised and do not answer the needs of the complexity of the qualitative research characteristics.

In this section, I will refer to the ethical dilemmas in autoethnography research, to the ethical questions and significances that evolve during the interpersonal interactions, as well as to the intertwining of ethics and loyalty.

Ethical dilemmas in autoethnography research

Autoethnographic research relies on particular subjective narratives, involving the interaction between the researcher and the people who are part of these narratives (Lapadat, 2017). The ethical issues that arise concern the extent to which the narratives are likely to harm the confidentiality of those included in the descriptions and whether the researcher has to obtain their consent to be included in the narrative (Méndez, 2013). In an attempt to address this problem, I anonymised the identifiable details of the organisation or the involved parties to try and preserve their confidentiality. However, this may interfere with, and obscure some of the characteristics which may be relevant to my description of the interpersonal interactions as they occurred in reality. When writing the narratives, I tried to represent their actions in a fair way that would reflect the events but not expose their identity. My commitment to the people described in the narratives involved informing

them about the research I was conducting and being very particular about fully anonymising them. Yet, in certain cases while I was writing the narratives, I could not know in advance who would be included, and therefore I could only inform them in retrospect.

I was never casual about the people I wrote about. Not only was I thinking about anonymity and protecting their privacy, I also took the ethical imperatives seriously and made great efforts to represent them fairly, such that if they were to read the narrative, they would recognise themselves and it would be a fair reflection of what actually happened. The autoethnographic research method is based on real life narratives and is not fiction. Loyalty in such a research method means that it is important to show allegiance both to the people you write about but also to the value of academic integrity.

The focus of analysis using autoethnographic methodology is on understanding the interactions and relationships that evolve between the players involved in the event under inquiry, including the researcher herself. This kind of examination raises a range of ethical issues.

Ethical perspectives that evolve in social interaction

In Western thought, people have become generally considered to be autonomous individuals whose mutual exchanges are based on rational decisions (Griffin, 2002). According to this perspective, we are 'weighing the consequences of the outcomes and deciding whether to proceed or not'... and 'we do this on the basis of a "contract" with all other individuals according to which each of us will be held responsible for the act that is "carried out" after rational reflection' (ibid, p. 176). Thus, it is assumed that human behaviour involves pre-judgmental considerations, based on ethical codes which have been known and are absorbed by us in advance, and have 'become the "solid reality" of codes that seem to be an unchanging subject matter' (ibid, p. 180). Thus, ethics, that are the sum of the customs, habits, laws, principles and practices, have come to be viewed as stable, with a universal character.

As opposed to the view of the autonomous individual and to the notion of ethics as universal principles, Mead (1908) argues 'that the moral interpretation of our experience

must be found within the experience itself' (p. 315) and that the solution to a moral problem 'cannot be a mere reference to a perfect model of conduct already in existence' (p. 320). According to Mead, individuals' moral development is an on-going construction and interpretation process of their decisions and actions which emerges in the human interactions and does not exist in external universals.

Drawing on Mead's social perspective on ethics, Griffin (2002) suggests that as humans who are interacting with each other, we are simultaneously impacting others and being impacted by them. These interpersonal interactions are loaded with ethical meanings and implications. Griffin argues that, 'All conduct is on-going processes of communicative interaction in which individuals perpetually negotiate with each other what "ethical" means in the living present of their local interaction' (ibid, p 58). Moreover, he claims that the ethics of our actions emerge in our highly contextualized interactions with others and are not given in any kind of whole, but rather as an ongoing negotiated process in the interactions between people, with regard to the habits of ethical codes formed by others who have interacted before them. As such, ethics and morality are not static, but they continually evolve and change.

Griffin (2002) also draws attention to how the system thinking perspective portrays leaders as autonomous individuals who articulate the purpose and values of the whole system (i.e., the organisation) which serve as the ethical principles that members of the organisation are expected to follow. Thus, based on this approach, Griffin argues that leadership and ethics are interwoven. Contrary to the systemic perspective, Griffin proposes that the perspective of the complex responsive processes of relating provides an alternative way of thinking about leadership and ethics. The ethics of action is regarded 'as processes of perpetual negotiation that do indeed depend upon personal desires, aims and aspirations as well as natural contingencies' (Stacey and Mowles, 2016, p. 401).

As an organisational consultant, I am involved in a web of relations with my consultees in a way that our collaboration directly and indirectly, implicitly and explicitly, influences their relationships with others. As such, ethics reflect the human responsive processes of relating, the human actions and the mutual impacts. For example, the work with the senior female

managers who mentored junior female managers (project 2) influenced the company-wide discourse over and above their internal discourse. The influence was felt in the discourse between the managers and their mentees, between the mentees and their direct managers, among the management members concerning a wide range of issues of equality and the lack of gender equality, and in the ethical meanings of these issues. This discourse also had practical effects on decisions taken, such as leaving the organisation or examining promotion processes within the organisation. Thus, ethics reflect the idea that human actions are not a simple matter of individuals which can be separated from each other but rather they are constantly constructing and reconstructing the ethical meanings of the reality people are involved with.

The questions of ethics were discussed during the DMan community meetings, both in the context of specific dilemmas (e.g. how to anonymise a key figure in the narrative without blurring characteristics that are important for the event), as well as ethical questions connected to the research topics (such as pressure of the members of the group to have a uniform position as a way of demonstrating loyalty to their own group and not to the other group, as described in project 3). I am aware of, and agree with, the statement that 'ethical meaning does not reside in external universals to be applied to interaction but, rather, ethical meaning continually emerges in the interaction itself. Ethics are being negotiated in the interaction' (Griffin, 2002, p. 20). Moreover, the more I progressed in this research, the more I have become interested in reflexivity ('to think about how we are thinking about how we are engaged', Mowles, 2015, p. 60) and sensitive to ethical dilemmas in my practice (e.g., my tendency to take the management side and its ethical consequences on the consulting processes).

[Ethical aspects in loyalty relationships](#)

The ethical aspects and dilemmas associated with the sense of loyalty and how they are expressed arose when analysing the narratives in this research, as well as in the arguments presented in the synopsis. The narrative inquiry indicates that on one hand, the sense of loyalty among group members can promote a sense of belonging, support, security and solidarity. Yet, on the other hand, it can evoke ethical reactions such as the exclusion of those who are not part of the loyal group (Fletcher, 1995), or becoming insensitive or open

to explore others' perspectives. Furthermore, the sense of loyalty might even suppress our willingness to take a risk to present a different opinion or to express criticism towards the collective dominant voice. Being loyal to a certain targeted object may require us to suspend our own judgment about its object or even to set aside good judgment (Ewin, 1992, pp. 403, 411).

The research literature that examines loyalty both from the philosophical perspective (e.g. Ewin, 1992; Kleinig, 2014) and from the management perspective (e.g. Coughlan, 2005; Hildreth, 2016) discusses loyalty in either/or binary terms: 'Loyalty is either a moral duty or a dangerous attachment' (Hart and Thompson, 2007, p. 297) and questions whether loyalty, which in its essence, is a reflection of partiality, fosters ethical behaviour or unethical conduct (Hildreth, Gino & Bazerman, 2016).

While the the study of loyalty as a moral construct has been relatively ignored by organisational scholars (Coughlan, 2005, p. 45), moral philosophy points to an inherent bias sometimes created by or seen in loyalty which may, on occasion, border on unethical behaviour (Hildreth, 2016, p. 2). The research on loyalty from an ethical perspective is divided into two. Some scholars describe loyalty as driving corruption, as a manifestation of nepotism which 'encourages unethical behavior...mainly for the benefit of their groups' (Hildreth, Gino & Bazerman, 2016, p. 16) in different areas of our social lives (i.e., politics, business, sport). Other scholars try to show that loyalty can foster ethical conduct or even can be viewed as a moral value, an ethical principle, which guides human behaviour and is 'closely related to other moral values, such as honesty and benevolence' (ibid, p. 17). In both research attempts, scholars try to identify the circumstances in which loyalty has positive or negative ethical consequences.

The research assumptions at the basis of these studies are that ethics are a set of pre-determined rules, external universal moral imperatives which guide the members of an organisation. This perspective ignores the fact that ethics emerge in our social contextualised interactions with others and are not a set of given laws. Griffin (2002) proposes an alternative approach, based on the perspective of the complex responsive processes of relating according to which 'ethics, good conduct, are the social process of

individual participants knowingly interacting with each other and having to account to each other in an on-going, ordinary, everyday way for the detail of what they do in their local situation in the living present' (p. 160).

Consistent with the complex responsive processes approach, the ethics of the researcher or the consultant's activities, is contingent upon the researching or consulting situations and the emerging and ongoing negotiation with those with whom they are interacting (Stacey & Griffin, 2005 , P. 26).

Loyalty relationships between the consultant and consultee involve ethical questions that extend beyond contractual aspects such as confidentiality. The consultancy relationship is temporal and dependent on joint agreement about the essence of the consulting task. Yet, by its nature, the consulting process may develop into topics that had not been pre-agreed upon, or could lead to unexpected results (such as the mentor and mentees leaving the company in P2). The client may perceive these consequences as disloyalty on the part of the consultant. An open and reflective dialogue on the consultant/consultee relationship is valuable for the continuing relationship.

Working within an arena of conflicts of loyalties, the consultant may face ethical dilemmas. This may occur if he/she raises challenging questions about how the group operates which could increase factionalism within it and result in the consultant being perceived as taking the side of one of the involved parties and not being loyal to the other. Or, the consultant may avoid presenting a clear stance on issues and then risks being perceived as indecisive. These ethical questions were mentioned in the descriptions and analysis of the narratives. However, further research on these ethical issues is required.

Aiming to further reflect on my research work, I will briefly summarise the four projects in the following section, take an additional reflexive turn and critically appraise each project from my current point of view, trying to indicate how my thinking has evolved during the DMan programme.

Projects Summary and Reflexive Turns

The critical review of my four research projects enables me to identify and describe the main themes that have emerged and to articulate the movement in my own thinking and practice. The writing, reflective and critical inquiry and re-writing processes of the four research projects have amplified the multi-faceted theme of loyalty that cuts through the different projects. These include the diverse relational objects of loyalty, the varied loyalty configurations, the emerging and changeable experience of loyalty and disloyalty and the wide spectrum of its influence on and significance in shaping human relationships.

In taking another reflexive turn on my research, other inter-related themes emerged that play an important role in gaining a deeper understanding of the complex organisational reality, as well as of the theme of loyalty. These relational processes include the following: A sense of belonging (inclusion versus exclusion), identity and identity formation, power struggles and the sense of control and loss of control by various players within the organisational arena.

I will refer to these various themes within the reflexive turn of each project.

Project 1: Fluctuations in Organisational Identity

Project 1 is an account of the events and schools of thought that have shaped my practice and the way I make sense of it. Although this inquiry focused on my vocational path, the attempt to separate the professional, the personal and the social contexts is impossible, since my life and work experiences in these spheres are strongly intertwined. Elias (2001) argues that 'each individual is born into a group of people who were there before him' (ibid, p. 21); and that 'he takes on his individual stamp from the history of these relationships ... This history and this human network are present in him and are represented by him' (ibid, p. 27).

I was born in Israel, part of the first generation of children who were born there after the establishment of the state. We are named the 'new state generation' (Yablonka, 2018). As children, we were expected to have a strong sense of identification with, and loyalty to, the

evolving state, to conform completely with the social norms and to take part in further developing and defending it. Our parents expected that we would form a new, resilient, and self-reliant Israeli identity. The identification with a greater cause and a sense of loyalty were values that I absorbed while growing up; there was no possibility of questioning the one-dimensional agenda and I was even unaware of the option of raising doubts. The process of internalising ideology to the extent that it becomes part of one's self is addressed by Stacey and Mowles: 'Ideology can be thought of as an imaginative 'whole'... As such it is largely habitual, and so unconscious, process of self and social at the same time' (2016, p. 397).

As a child, I was exposed to the centrality of work and to the loyalty, dedication, and commitment my parents had for the organisations they were affiliated with. The workplace was perceived as a 'greater whole', far more than just a means to an end. It was viewed as part of the effort to lay the foundations of the national economy. With hindsight, I came to understand that when I joined the workforce, I had chosen to see the workplace as an environment that provided me with continuous learning, growth, and creation. Confronted with personal distressing situations (war and illness), the workplace symbolised a 'healing space' for me and the opportunity to 'get back to life', as well as a place to gain a subjective sense of control.

Learning about humanistic psychological theories in my academic studies (e.g. Maslow, 1954; Peters and Waterman, 1982; Senge, 1990 and Collins and Porras, 2002; Schein, 2010), validated my approach that being highly engaged with the organisational vision and values, generates a sense of meaning in one's actions. This in turn promotes a high level of loyalty and organisational success, so such theories propose. Within this context, I used to perceive my role as an organisational culture designer who actualises the organisation's values.

In retrospect, I recognise how my need to influence the employees' sense of loyalty is combined with my need to create organisational 'harmony'. Enhancing loyalty, in this view, means creating a sense of belonging to a greater 'whole', strengthening the feelings of 'togetherness' while attempting to blur differences and conflicts. This perception was challenged, over time, when I and other employees were faced with massive layoffs during

economic crises, relocation of plants and production to developing countries, mergers and acquisitions, as well as employees' frequent resignations, despite organisational investment in their education and training. These experiences left me with questions to inquire further into the nature of employee-organisational loyalty and commitment, and into my role as an OD consultant in these relationships.

Reflexive turn

Re-reading my P1 from a more critical perspective, makes me more aware of how efforts to enhance identification with and loyalty to a 'greater cause' means to attract others to, or to be attracted by, an idealised future for the 'whole'. The 'wholes' are the communities we are part of (e. g. the state, the working organisation, our family). Stacey and Mowles (2016) claim that organisations can be viewed as 'wholes', not as a single physical entity, but rather as idealised patterns of relating between people; not as systems or a creation of a thing, but rather as 'a feeling arising in a human body in relating to other human bodies in joint activity' (p. 390).

Leaders' articulation of organisational visions are examples of idealisations of the 'whole', which promise an ideal future, as if there were no lack of obstacles on the way to realising the visions (ibid, p. 390). It does not mean that these declared visions and their related values are good or bad idealisations, yet it draws our attention to the fact that they have the effect of including those who adhere to the visions and enhance the establishment of collective identities. Identifying with, or being part of and loyal to, a greater 'whole' evokes in people a sense of enlarged self (Mead, 1934, p. 315). It may signify to people that they can accomplish their own desires through belonging to the group. Establishing a collective 'we' identity, attachment and loyalty to the wholeness, can also be understood as forms of social control. In Foucault's terms (1979) it is a form of disciplinary power, in which people internalise what is expected from them and self-regulate their actions accordingly, with less need for external control.

Reflecting on my role, I understand that as a HR manager or organisational consultant, I was simultaneously part of the organisational collective whole and identified with its vision and values, yet I also assisted in designing and preserving this future image. My practice was

geared towards reinforcing the employee-organisational relationship through various means: developing internal programmes for communicating the organisational vision and ideals, designing leadership development programmes and creating dialogue circles among various stakeholders. These activities aimed to engage the employees with an understanding of the 'bigger picture' and enhance their sense of belonging to and identification with the organisation.

My success was measured by, among other parameters, the extent to which I succeeded in reducing employees' resignations and increasing employees' engagement, and their willingness to invest time and effort in the organisation's cause. As such, an employee's leaving was perceived, in many cases, as disloyalty and a failure on my part and that of other managers. This view of consulting is based on the system thinking approach, which assumes that organisations are goal-seeking entities in which managers are required to set the strategies and design implementation plans. A critical and reflective view of the prevalent managerial discourse accentuates how an organisational consultant is expected to collude with the management's agenda and in some cases even to be the one who facilitates implementation of the management policy.

Organisational conflicts, although unavoidable in reality rather than in the rhetoric of organisations, were experienced by me (and others) as a disrupting process to our sense of belonging, to organisational loyalty, and to achieving common goals. In the rhetoric, loyalty to a higher goal and a sense of togetherness emphasised the partnerships among members of the organisation, while levelling out the conflicts.

Referring back to my personal background, and drawing on Elias' sociological historical perspective (an 'airman perspective', in his terms, 2001, p.47), it is possible to assume that strengthening the sense of loyalty to and the identification with a greater ideal, such as setting up a state, may have been necessary for Israel at that point in time to ensure the creation of a wide common denominator, to build a strong foundation, to reinforce cohesion around a common goal, and even to bring on board those who immigrated to the new state after having survived the Holocaust in Europe. Later on, after the state had been founded, the efforts to strengthen and deepen the sense of loyalty to the state emerged as

a reaction to being in a continual state of war and threat of war. The entire population lived in the shadow of past and previous dangers and experienced profound distrust of the 'other'. Yet, simultaneously, the sense of loyalty restricts the opportunity for asking questions and even could potentially limit or suppress the freedom for critical thinking.

In a similar vein, and referring to my professional experience, my (and others') efforts, in the workplace to create an idealisation of the organisational vision and to reinforce the sense of belonging to a greater goal may have contributed to creating a false 'we' identity that masked conflicts and covered up the underlying power relationships.

Project 2: A Woman to Woman Programme – Attachment, Identification and Loyalty

In project 2, my narrative was about a mentoring programme in which senior female managers aimed to empower women as they moved into their first managerial roles. As the mentoring programme proceeded, a supportive and safe space emerged for the mentors to discuss their career and gendered dilemmas. Yet, at the same time, the mentors were stunned when they realised the extent of the gap between the declared policy and the actual company practices regarding gender equality. This realisation evoked feelings of frustration and resentment among the mentors towards the management.

Two months after concluding the programme, one mentor and three mentees resigned from the company, claiming that they did not foresee any future for self-development in the organisation. In addition, several direct managers complained that they were not prepared for the confrontational and assertive reactions expressed by some of the mentees about their promotion. Reflecting on the narrative made me aware that I perceived the mentors' and mentees' resignations as acts of disloyalty to the organisation (i.e., the management) that had invested resources in their development, and to their female colleagues who had been abandoned in the middle of the struggle.

At this point, my perception of loyalty was aligned with the common binary view, similar to Hirschman's model (1970): someone is either loyal (while staying and voicing one's ideas) or

disloyal (when leaving and avoiding a continuous struggle). Moreover, experiencing the resignations placed me in a situation of conflicting loyalties: loyalty to the mentors (i.e., supporting their desire to change the company's practices regarding gender inequality) and loyalty to the management's interests (i.e., to retain talented managers, such as the departing mentor, and to facilitate programmes in alignment with their policies). I was concerned about whether the management would perceive my intervention as if I had 'fanned the flames' and thus they would consider me to be disloyal. I felt disloyal to the management with whom I had worked closely on other projects. Being involved in multiple loyalties inevitably results in conflicts since they confront us with potentially competing demands and expectations.

Exploring the narrative of this project was mainly through the prism of the connections between gender and the sense of loyalty. The reflective analysis sheds light on gender as a social and political process within the organisational realm. The mentors' discussions about gendered incidents echoed my experiences of being the only female manager at the male managerial table, struggling to be heard and to be influential. I was part of a minority in terms of gender and professional discipline. Reflecting on this narrative increased my awareness of my ingrained belief, that if I were to work hard enough and become a 'skilled expert', this would be sufficient for achieving professional success, recognition and career promotion, regardless of my gender. I also became aware of how much I had suppressed my vulnerability by avoiding gender issues within the scope of my consulting work. Moreover, I realised that gender is not just an individual experience, but it gives rise to social processes within and between groups.

Reflexive turn

In retrospect, as the mentors discussed issues of gender inequality in a more open and frank manner, based on their own day-to-day experiences (and those of their mentees), they became more united around the collective struggle. This was no longer the individual, isolated experience of each one of the female managers, rather the issue resonated within the group. It became clear to them (and to me) that these are inbuilt organisational patterns. Their mutual sense of loyalty and the justness of their cause emerged as they became more aware of the gender inequality in practice and of the management's double

standards. The evolving power struggle against the management is an expression of the interdependency relationship between the female managers' group and the management, which consisted mainly of males, and may even demonstrate inclusion and exclusion processes.

I now understand that I was also a player in the power struggle between the female mentors and the management, although I was unaware of this at the time. I refrained from considering myself part of a political struggle, but from a more detached view, I recognise that I was not an objective observer, but rather a 'co-contributor' to the discussions, influencing and being influenced by the conversations. As I became more emotionally involved and identified with the mentors' struggle to promote their gender equality agenda, I even became aware of the role I assumed in the group, becoming a temporary leader (Mowles, 2009), encouraging them to initiate a discussion with the management. By assuming this role, I was now in conflict with the management's non-verbalised expectation that I act as a professional agent who represents it and works on its behalf, and who is in alignment with the management's declared gender equality policy.

Acknowledging that power relations are an inevitable part of organisational life (Elias, 1978), I am now more aware that my practice always entails political and power struggles, as will be evidenced in the additional narratives of this thesis: power struggles between management and employees in project 3, or between two brothers in project 4.

Project 3: Caught Up in a Power Struggle

My third project centres around a crisis of trust between management and employees in the context of major organisational changes led by the management and a one-sided unionising act initiated by the employees. The narrative took place at the Centre for Science and Technology Education, a non-profit organisation, when a new CEO was appointed. From the time he took up his position, the CEO had made a few decisions, such as shutting down a limited number of educational programmes, which led to several employees being laid-off. Those changes evoked feelings of uncertainty among the employees. Rumours regarding additional changes and downsizing had started to spread among the employees.

The narrative focuses on a single off-site management meeting called to discuss and outline a future organisational change plan. While this meeting was taking place, a few employees tried to convince their colleagues to join the Labour Union, persuading those who were hesitant by describing the insecure employment circumstances they foresaw. The management were shocked and furious. Some of them experienced it as a 'coup d'état'. They were immensely angry and resentful about the employees' initiative, and even more about the way the employees had chosen to demonstrate their resistance. They felt betrayed. I was as surprised as the management members were by the events. Back then, I perceived these unionising efforts as creating a barrier between the management and the employees.

Reflecting on my narrative, the issue of loyalty emerged within the context of a power struggle between the senior management and the employees. While the Labour Union was viewed by the employees as protection against a possible negative impact (such as layoffs) of the planned changes, the management perceived the act of unionising, as well as the employees' resistance, as interfering obstacles and as disloyalty. The power struggle between the management and the employees exposed the emerging split between them. The rupture between the two groups intensified as the crisis of trust deepened. Both groups attempted to build a sense of 'one-ness', despite the absence of full agreement within each group. Some of the employees objected to the unionising initiative, and even among the management, some members questioned the necessity of the organisational change. Yet, the explicit and implicit expectations from each group's members were to present a united front and to be loyal to the group's agenda.

Reflexive turn

Inquiring into the narrative, I realise that loyalty can be understood in terms of mutuality, in which the group's members are supposed to fulfil the group's expectations. I have arrived at this realisation by drawing on both the research of Scott (1990), who identified different behaviours of subordinate groups, in the presence or absence of the dominant group, and on Elias and Scotson's research (1994), who illustrate the evolving gap and the power dynamic between two distinct neighbourhood groups. These two studies highlight power

struggles between groups, the evolution of the 'us' and 'them' splits and the strength that the group members have to urge their colleagues to show loyalty to the group's interests. The approach of both Scott and Elias in their research on communities differs from the traditional organisational literature on loyalty that emphasises perseverance and constancy in loyal relationships among people (e.g., Coughlan, 2005) but does not discuss loyalty within the context of power struggles.

Yet, being loyal to someone (or something) is potentially exclusionary of the other (Fletcher, 1993 and Kleinig, 2014) and may even deepen the feelings of 'us' versus 'them'. Thus, the sense of loyalty among group members can serve as a means of strengthening the 'we-ness', but at the same time as weakening the freedom to voice diverse perspectives or even to be more attentive to the other side's narratives, needs or concerns. Questions arise about whether being loyal means silencing other voices that do not fit into the dominant voices (e.g. the employees who are leading the unionising initiative or the CEO who is trying to lead the change) or whether loyalty to a group or a position is an outcome of an interactive process of negotiations among members of the group and is a reflection of the inter- and intra-group power struggles. In both groups, the managers and employees, pressure was exerted to voice a single, united stance and there was a lack of perceived legitimacy to express additional voices. It is possible that the sense of uncertainty that arose among the members of each group because of the discussions about the planned organisational changes resulted in intense pressure to create unanimity of opinion in order to gain control, even if this was only an illusion.

In retrospect, I realise that while I was experiencing the 'us' versus 'them' split between the employees and the management within the evolved breakdown, I became trapped, falling into a binary pattern of taking the management's side and becoming identified as being loyal to their agenda and not taking the employees' side. This response put me in a position of being disloyal to the employees and weakened my ability to help both sides negotiate their competing interests and loyalties. Being biased towards one side, and in many cases being identified with the management that contracted the consultation, may position the consultant as an agent of the management, rendering him/her as a player in the political game between the involved parties. The consultant may become viewed as a channel for

transferring messages between the sides, or as an actor who mediates or hinders dialogue between the stakeholders.

Project 4: Loyalty within a Family Business

This narrative focuses on the process that two brothers underwent who jointly own a family business, and who wanted to discuss the future succession plan. They had inherited the business from their father and under their joint management it had grown by expanding its line of products and its presence in the global markets. The alternatives of selling the company or handing over the reins to their children, who had already joined the company in junior positions, had been explored in the past and rejected by the brothers. Their joint decision to recruit a CEO, who was not a family member, from outside the company, and the moves they made to implement their decision (e.g., interviewing several candidates), evoked disagreements and emotional reactions between the siblings regarding the future of the company.

The feelings that arose while discussing the future of the family business were not openly shared during our joint discussions. The narrative's reflexive analysis revealed that the sense of loyalty, although not discussed explicitly, was intertwined in the discussions we had about the implications of appointing a new CEO: loyalty and disloyalty between the siblings and between them and other involved parties. This emotionally laden process ended in halting the CEO recruitment process. Looking back, I realised that I had been cautious in my interventions and in my attempts to encourage the brothers to talk openly about their emotions. I was afraid of harming what I perceived to be a harmonious relationship between the two brothers.

Reflexive turn

Rereading and reanalysing the narrative highlighted the various aspects of the sense of loyalty that were seen in the earlier narratives: loyalty is a relational process that expresses the dynamics of the relationships between the involved parties. Conflicts of loyalties are unavoidable, since we are involved in a network of various relationships that confront us with competing expectations. And paradoxically, the 'other', who is not part of the group

we belong to, is a threat to the collective identity, yet excluding him/her helps to reinforce the sense of 'we-ness' and mutual loyalty. However, the relationship between the family and non-family members, who work together in the family business, illustrates the complexity of the experience of loyalty and the existence of diverse 'loyalty configurations', which express varying levels of intensity, diverse connotations and are all context-dependent.

Moreover, the expectations among family members to be loyal to each other is rooted in who we are and is almost perceived as 'a universal moral norm' of loyalty (Doherty, 1999, p. 4) or as 'involuntary' loyalty, which *a priori* create reciprocal expectations and mutual commitments. Yet at the same time, this sense may change as we grow older, as the nuclear family expands and the brothers set up their own families (as in this narrative), the death of the founding father or other reasons. Anything that unsettled the sense of loyalty among family members was experienced as 'something going wrong' or as betrayal.

Drawing on Bowlby's attachment theory (1969), has helped me in understanding the sense of 'involuntary' loyalty among family members. Bowlby claims that people have an existential innate need to be close to 'attachment figures' to help them cope with threats and hardships in their environment. A mother, or other significant caregivers, who protect and support infants, provide them with an emotional and instrumental secure base, enabling them to develop relationships with other people, or to develop patterns of coping with stressful situations or uncertainty. These interpersonal abilities are formed during childhood and come to the fore in adulthood during various life events. When this safe primary attachment is lacking, the infant will search for a secondary attachment to relieve the sense of a threat and will become hyperactive or disassociate.

According to Bion's perspective, loyalty to family members may be explained as the innate, basic tendency to attach ourselves to people who give us a safe, certain supportive foundation for coping with threatening and uncertain situations. Accordingly, loyalty among family members in a family business may be understood as a reconstruction or a copying of attachment patterns from the past, given that family members provide each other with the secure base for coping with future uncertainty. The sense of loyalty to family members – the

‘involuntary’ loyalties – form and influence the relationships among employees in the family business – both family and non-family members and influence the levels of trust and openness to share feelings. A sense of loyalty also impacts on considerations taken into account when deciding about managing the business or its future succession (e.g., whether to sell, whether to recruit a CEO from outside).

Attachment theory is helpful in that it sheds light on the differences between people in how they form coping patterns for stressful situations or threats. The theory provides a social explanation on the developmental process of how the individual’s ability to form relationships with, and become attached to others, is formed. The theory emphasises the individual’s point of view, even though it is formed in a social context and it predicts an individual’s future coping skills based on their past experiences.

Based on the theories of Mead and Elias, I suggest that they would agree that as people, we are the bearers of the social patterns of the family and society we grew up in. However, distinct from Bowlby, Mead and Elias emphasise that the individual and the environment (the not-self) mutually determine each other. The sense of loyalty is a mutual process in which we influence and are influenced by our relational patterns, and it is not simply a reproduction of past attachment templates. Elias (2001) argues that we as individuals have become who we are through social processes (e.g., acquiring the language, being exposed to rituals and social patterns of control), which have formed us. We absorb the social values and the manners of behaviour which are acceptable in our society. Becoming who we are represents the forms of both the social and the individual being. According to Elias’ approach, the formation of our sense of loyalty to certain values or to the family, society or country we are part of, may be explained as being part of this social process that shapes who we are. This statement does not necessarily aim to present the sense of loyalty as something static and unchanging. The opposite is true – events and our interactions with others shape our sense of loyalty to, and are shaped by various objects over time.

Even before Elias had formulated his approach, Mead adopted a similar perspective, arguing that while the ‘self’ and the environment (the ‘not-self’) are inseparable, nevertheless they mutually determine each other. ‘One’s own self is attained only through his taking the

attitude of the social group to which he belongs. He must become socialized to become himself' (Mead, quoted by Griffin, 2002, p. 146). Mead views the production of the self and the society as a paradoxical process, where we are born into a world of activity and meanings, which is forming us, while at the same time, we are forming the world (Mead, 1934, Chapter 1).

Unlike the paradoxical perception presented by Mead and Elias about the self and the social, the management literature on family businesses (e.g., Kets-de-Vries et al., 2007; Labaki, Michael-Tsabari, and Zachary, 2013) describes the organisational reality of these businesses as a joining of two contradictory entities: business versus family. The processes in such businesses are portrayed in dichotomous, binary terms such as: rational versus emotional; financial versus family. This research approach is based on the assumption that a successful family business is characterised by its ability to mediate between the contradictory forces operating in it. These binary divisions try to create clarity, but in fact they ignore the complexity of the family business and the inherent paradoxes in them, such as: inclusion versus exclusion; stability and permanence versus temporariness; and consensus versus change and renewal which were described in Project 4. A social paradox process, according to Mowles, is a particular form of contradiction in which 'there are two, mutually exclusive, self-referencing ideas which help define each other but negate each other both at the same time' (2015, p. 13). The paradox process emerges and occurs in humans and between humans in everyday actions and is unresolvable.

Having summarised my projects, I will present the key arguments that arise out of the reflexive inquiry.

Key Arguments

In the following, I will elaborate on three key arguments which address my research questions:

What does loyalty mean to different people in different organisational contexts?

What happens when people are loyal or disloyal in their interactions? What are the implications for consultancy?

The research has focused on the theme of loyalty, which is one of the prisms through which the dynamic relations among people in the organisation can be explored. For the most part, this research was conducted from my perspective, as an organisational consultant, who works mostly in the private sector in Israel, and the arguments are addressed in relation to my practice. The main arguments reflect the change in my way of thinking about how people experience loyalty within the organisational settings and mark the shift in my practice, which I will expand on further.

Argument 1: Loyalty is an expression of affiliations among people, rather than an individual trait or a fixed position. Our sense of loyalty is a social process which emerges and changes through our interactions with others and is shaped by the history of our relationships and our mutual expectations, yet paradoxically it is felt and experienced by individuals.

Argument 2: Loyalty can consolidate an aspiration towards unity and a feeling of oneness, blurring conflicts and disagreements within the 'we' group, and distancing people from the 'them' group. Loyalty is particularly called into question in breakdowns.

Argument 3: The consultant, who practices within the arena of the consultee's dynamic and conflicting loyalties, can offer a joint reflexive exploration, which may help in understanding the emergent configuration of their loyalties. This process can enable the members of organisations to take account of the plurality of interests in their thinking and practice. Yet, in a parallel process, the consultant is called upon to explore and interpret his/her own emerging loyalties and how they are impacted by and impact the consulting processes.

I will expand on each of these arguments below.

Argument 1: Loyalty is an expression of affiliations among people, rather than an individual trait or a fixed position. Our sense of loyalty is a social process which emerges and changes through our interactions with others and is shaped by the history of our relationships and our mutual expectations, yet paradoxically it is felt and experienced by individuals.

The first argument, in which I reframe loyalty as a relational process, is based on (a) a critical review of literature in the fields of management, sociology, psychology and philosophy to inquire into how the theme of loyalty is referred to and (b) the insights that have emerged from my reflection on my practice. Furthermore, I will attempt to clarify the complexity and paradoxical aspects of how loyalty is experienced and understood by people within their workplace in their everyday practices. The overall theme of loyalty has been analysed in all of the projects. In each project, a different perspective of the theme emerged as I wrote the narratives and then reflected on them with the help and encouragement of my learning set. My understanding of the theme also evolved through reading the literature on the subject.

The experience of loyalty is described in much of the management literature as people's attachment and trust (Hirschman, 1970; Adler and Adler, 1988), a form of dedication (Pettit, 1988), devotion, (Royce, Graham and Keeley, 1992) and adherence (Coughlan, 2005) towards a wide range of objects, such as friendships, families, organisations, professions and countries (Kleinig, 2014, 2017; Connor, 2007). Loyalties always have objects (other people, causes or principles) and the object particularises the experience of loyalty (Humphrey, 2017; Haughey, 1993). Moreover, 'Our *loyalty* tends to be expressed in *loyalties*. That is, it is not just a general affiliational attachment, but one that is tied to certain kinds of associations' (Kleinig, *The Stanford Encyclopedia*, 2017).

Loyalty has been addressed by researchers from different theoretical disciplines, such as psychology (e.g., Chen et al., 2002; Cunha, 2002), philosophy and ethics (e.g., Royce, 1908; Ewin, 1993; Kleinig, 2014), sociology (e.g., Connor, 2007), anthropology (e.g., Humphrey, 2017), politics (e.g., Hirschman, 1970) and management (e.g., Reichheld, 1996; Coughlan,

2005). While each school of thought emphasises different aspects of how people experience and express loyalty, the concept of loyalty remains loosely defined (Powers, 2000; Coughlan, 2005; Hart and Thompson, 2007). Moreover, it is associated with other concepts as commitment (Coughlan, 2005), solidarity, integrity and devotion (Kleinig, 2014), which only contributes to the confusion about its meaning.

Despite the fact that the researchers in the various disciplines who are studying the concept of loyalty have different theoretical bases, most of them tend to view loyalty from the individualistic perspective, even when taking a partially relational view. Drawing on the individualistic view, researchers debate whether loyalty is a personality trait (Coughlan, 2005) which is shaped by a developmental process, in response to being cared for by their caregivers, where people learn and internalise how to respond in a reciprocal manner towards their (potential) objects of loyalty (Haughey, 1993). Other scholars argue about whether loyalty is primarily an emotion within social interactions that motivates or justifies an action (e.g., Connor, 2007; Haughey, 1993); whether loyalty involves ongoing behaviour based upon the shared values that a person is affiliated with (Coughlan, 2005); or whether loyalty reflects a rational decision of the individual to be committed to other(s) based on a psychological contract (Hart and Thompson, 2007) and built on mutual expectations.

Viewing loyalty as either a feeling, cognition or action is based on the underlying perspective of systems theories (e.g., Bertalanffy, 1968; Katz and Kahn, 1966; Senge, 1990), which consider the individual (or the organisation) as a system consisting of sub-systems that interact with each other as if they can be separated from each other. Researchers' attempts to describe the experience of loyalty as either an emotional experience or as a cognitive or behavioural process describe artificial schematic divisions which obscure the complexity of the experience of loyalty as a social interactional one. As an example, the sense of loyalty that evolved among the female mentors in project 2 was not only an expression of an emotion or a decision to take a stance or perform an action, rather it was an interactive process of waking up to the dissonance between management policy on gender equality and its practice. The sense of mutual loyalty that developed among the female mentors expressed a combination of their feelings and their urge to act and promote their gender

agenda. Moreover, it highlighted that loyalty is a dynamic and changeable relational process.

Drawing partly on an individualistic perspective, the American philosopher Royce argues that loyalty is '*The willing and practical and thoroughgoing devotion of a person to a cause*' (1908, p. 9, Italics in source). The devotion of a loyal person to a cause is of his own free will. Yet, Royce also notes that loyalty is social, in the sense that it binds the loyal person to others in some sort of unity (ibid, p. 11). Others downplay or even ignore the social production of loyalty. The attempts to describe the experience of loyalty from an individual perspective, as an emotion, cognition or behaviour, simplify and blur the complexity of how loyalty is actually reflected in interpersonal interactions. These descriptions are based on a view that the individual defines his identity through internal processes of introspection and reason (Stacey, 2006, p. 3). This approach expresses an atomistic view of society, in which people are autonomous individuals, who are separated from each other and who have the inner ability to choose their own goals, means and plans to realise them. Moreover, implicit in this view is the assumption that an internal feeling or thought (such as loyalty) leads to actions such as self-sacrificing for the sake of the employer (Alvesson, 2000; Cole, 2000); whether working hard, staying late, going the extra mile to delight the customer or recommending the company to their friends as a good place to work (Sweetman, 2001, based on a comprehensive global survey). It means that the cause of any personal behaviour or change is the result of a rational effort of the autonomous (moral) individual. Loyalty in this sense only (or mainly) arises as a result of individual choices.

Employee/organisation relationships have been explored in the contemporary management literature through the lens of the functionalist perspective. These studies (e.g. Reichheld, 1996; Alvesson, 2000; Coughlan, 2005) emphasise the importance of constructing relationships based on loyalty. The underlining assumption is that loyalty is a positive asset for the organisation's success because these relationships have become undermined in recent years as employee voluntary turnover has increased, (i.e., 'employees look for a more independent, mobile workforce', Aityan and Gupta, 2012, p. 2) along with voluminous job cuts by the employers. Aligned with this view, loyalty is often described in the management literature as a means of preventing employees from leaving and instead,

as a potential way of encouraging those who might resign to voice their dissatisfaction while remaining in the organisation (Hirschman, 1970, P. 78). Scholars (Johnson, 2005; Aityan and Gupta, 2012) who view loyalty as a resource, propose a list of practices of how to promote organisational loyalty. Among the various organisational mechanisms, they note providing career-development programmes (Sweetman, 2001) and proper education and training to employees (Malinchak, 2011), instituting profit sharing and option plans and promoting engagement programmes which will enhance employees' organisational identification and a sense of ownership (Aityan and Gupta, 2012, p. 2). Other researchers view loyalty as a resource for enhancing a competitive advantage by providing benefits to those who are involved and contribute to the organisation's success (Reichheld, 2001; Smith and Rupp, 2002) or as a basis of cooperation.

During my many years as a Human Resources manager and as an organisational consultant, my practice was based on the perspective that loyalty is a key factor for organisations to succeed in accomplishing their goals. I considered that part of my role was to promote organisational activities that would influence the employees' sense of identification with the organisational vision and would create a link between their personal success (e.g., furthering education, career development) and the organisation's success (as described in project 1). This instrumental approach views the employee/organisation relationship as a contractual association in which leaders (and consultants) are accountable for developing and maintaining those relationships. In this light, loyalty is a means to the end of enhancing the employee's affiliation to the organisation. Adopting such a view ignores the complexity, reciprocity and fluctuation of these relationships.

A critical approach to the way employee loyalty to the organisation is portrayed in the mainstream literature (e.g., 'Loyalty as the absence of exit', Alvesson, 2000, p. 1107) is presented by Sennett and Alvesson, who critique capitalism and propose different meanings of loyalty. Sennett (1998), an economic sociologist, explores the transformation of the working environment in the capitalist era, and argues that people have to cope with new concepts of flexibility, ever-changing working conditions and risk, which create feelings of rootlessness and loss: a loss of trust among working colleagues; a loss of commitment towards the task; and a loss of loyalty towards the organisations. Critical management

scholars Alvesson and Spicer (2012) claim that in order to reduce conflict and friction experiences, and to smooth over interactions among its members (p. 1213), organisations construct and adapt different devices and methods which block inquiry and the expression of doubts and reflection on the staff's joint work. Leaders strive to create instead a climate of certainty, stability and productivity. Alvesson and Spicer coined the concept of organisational 'functional stupidity' to describe institutional processes such as setting goals and defining Key Performance Indicators (KPI). In this light, embracing loyalty in organisations as a mechanism which involves 'refraining from being reflexive, avoiding asking for justifications for decisions and structures and minimising substantive reasoning about values and goals' (ibid) may be counterproductive and lead to an undermining of trust and loyalty.

Through my research, I have come to view loyalty as a relational process in which people are attached to, affiliated with and identify with others or with a collective in complex and sometimes contradictory ways. Being attached to diverse objects of loyalty implies that it is not the object, but rather the kind of relationship (i.e., history, interests, expectations, power relations) that we are engaged with (Humphrey 2017, p. 400). Yet, at the same time that loyalty emerges in social interactions, we experience it and ascribe different meanings to these experiences as individuals. As for example, in project 2, when one of the female mentors left the organisation at the end of the mentoring programme, I experienced this as betrayal and abandonment of the joint struggle of all the mentors to promote gender equality in the organisation. However, the other female mentors considered this step as a source of empowerment and the freedom to choose.

Based on the perspective of complex responsive processes of relating and on the current research, I argue that the experience of loyalty, and the meaning people ascribe to this sense, emerges and changes while people are interacting with each other, within the different social contexts that they are involved in. The experience of loyalty (e.g., feeling of belonging to a group, struggling in favour of joint interests, sharing a common history of relationships, allegiance to shared values) is felt by individuals. However, this experience becomes a pattern within a group, which may then have further impacts on the group members' social interactions. Thus, loyalty can be viewed as a highly social experience yet,

paradoxically it is felt by individuals. This is a different view to the one which considers loyalty either in terms of the experience of individuals or solely as a social process.

This argument is based on Elias and Mead's perspectives that there is no separation between the self and the social, but 'as selves we are both individual and social at the same time: the group is already part of us' (as explained by Mowles, 2015, p. 38). Elias claims that as human beings we are born into and grow up within a 'human web', a network of interdependencies. Loyalty among people can be viewed as a social process which strengthens or loosens the threads of the social net. Mead argues that we develop and make sense of the world, 'the generalised other' through the socialisation process. Or as he phrases it:

As a man adjusts himself to a certain environment, he becomes a different individual; but in becoming a different individual he has affected the community in which he lives. It may be a slight effect, but in so far as he has adjusted himself, the adjustments have changed the type of environment to which he can respond and the world is accordingly a different world. There is always a mutual relationship of the individual and the community in which the community lives. (1934, p. 215)

Mead draws our attention to the paradox of self and society as an inherent contradiction between the individual and the group. On one hand, he argues, we are oriented towards collaboration, since we are dependent one on each other, yet on the other hand, we strive to feel independent; on one hand we want to be part of a group, to be included, yet on the other hand, we do not want to compromise our individuality and freedom.

Drawing on the perspective of complex responsive processes of relating, which has been influenced by Mead's paradoxical understanding of self and society, I now view the experience of loyalty to my society as a social process, composed of intertwined, diverse social interactions, which have impacted my ways of thinking. In project 1, I described how my sense of loyalty to my country was formed and influenced by overt and covert social processes through direct and indirect messages and varied rituals that were conveyed to me by those who reared and educated me (e.g., my parents, teachers, counsellors and friends). I (and my generation) were expected to be unquestionably committed and loyal to a

'greater cause' (Yablonka, 2018). Along with the wish to be part of the society I grew up in, I (and others) ascribed meanings to the sense of loyalty that differed from what was instilled in us. With hindsight, I see that I attributed great importance to the value of loyalty among members of a community and I even tried to bring this importance into the organisational arena.

In the literature, the question of whether loyalty is a virtue or a vice is frequently debated. Kleinig claims that loyalty is usually seen as a virtue, albeit a problematic one (The Stanford Encyclopedia, 2017). The sense of loyalty among people has a positive connotation and is viewed as a binding factor that brings people together for a common goal and joint struggle. I idealised this sense of loyalty and assumed that it is 'a good asset' which should be promoted in an instrumental way in organisations in order to achieve commitment, devotion, and a sense of togetherness for a common goal. However, in practice, the more professional experience I gained, and the more I progressed in my critical inquiry as part of the current research, the more I began to view the complexity, ambivalences and controversial aspects of the sense of loyalty among people. The sense of loyalty among group members can lead to an exclusion of those who are not part of the group, with the aim of strengthening the feeling of belonging (Fletcher, 1995), or to drive people to one-dimensional observations and discourages a multiplicity of opinions. Ewin, an Australian philosopher, representing the school of thought that observes the problematic aspects of loyalty, argues that because loyalty can be misplaced and because, once formed, it requires us not only to suspend our own judgment about its object but even to set aside good judgment (Ewin, 1992, pp. 403, 411), its pretensions of achieving the status of a virtue are undermined, for the virtues are internally linked to some idea of good judgment. For example, in project 3, the CEO of the Centre for Science and Technology Education expected the management team to have uniform ideas and show uncompromising loyalty in their stand against the 'rebellious' employees. This made it difficult for the members of the management team to express a different opinion, and even suppressed this possibility. As a consultant, I became a player in the political game and my loyalty was expressed in that I identified with the sense of betrayal that the management team felt. I justified this position by being judgmental towards the employees regarding the way in which they decided to unionise, even if I grew uncomfortable about this stance later after further reflection.

In the following arguments, I present additional perspectives that emphasise the complexity of the sense of loyalty, and even the problematic aspects involved in it.

Argument 2: Loyalty can consolidate an aspiration towards unity and a feeling of oneness, blurring conflicts and disagreements within the 'we' group, and distancing people from the 'them' group. Loyalty is particularly called into question in breakdowns.

This argument is taking a highly social view of the self, such as the one adopted by the perspective of complex responsive processes of relating, which views people as social individuals, dependent on others and being formed in their interaction with each other. From birth, individuals grow up within a 'human web' (Elias, 2001, p. 14). This is a network of interdependencies and relationships of 'trusted friends and enemies, a family, a circle of acquaintances to which he belongs', a complex net which 'he must conform to it, shape himself in accordance with it and perhaps develop further on its basis' (ibid, p. 14). Becoming who we are combines the forms and processes of both the social and the individual being and becoming.

Based on this social approach, loyalty is viewed as a relational process, which emerges among people, reflects the sense of their affiliation towards a shared object, need or ideology and may explain the dynamics of the interpersonal relationships among the group's members. The sense of loyalty may bind the group's members together and reinforce the experience of 'one-ness' and thus create a feeling that they can accomplish anything simply through their belonging to an idealised group in which they are participants (Stacey and Mowles, 2016, p. 390). Belonging to a certain group of people, which is significant for the members, or which represents values that are important to them, evokes a sense of loyalty among them. Mutual loyalty among the members or a joint loyalty and commitment to an (imagined or real) object evokes a sense of enlarged self (Mead, 1934) and the feeling of being part of a greater 'whole'.

According to Turquet (1974), a psychoanalyst, the attraction of the group's members to become part of a greater 'whole' and to experience a sense of 'one-ness' occurs when members of the group feel uncertainty and anxiety. They 'seek to join in a powerful union with an omnipotent force, unobtainably high, to surrender self for passive participation, and thereby feel existence, well-being, and wholeness' (Turquet, 1974, p. 357). The sense of 'one-ness' gives the individual the feeling that he will be able to cope with the experience of uncertainty and the sense of being under threat. This behavioural pattern is an additional one to the three-behavioural responses, which Bion (1961) defined as basic assumptions (i.e., dependency, fight/flight and pairing). These reactions express an anxiety that overwhelms the group members in the face of uncertainty. According to Bion, in these stressful situations the group members will deflect their attention from the group's functioning and deploy different ways of coping, some of which may be very unhelpful to the group.

In retrospect, I understand that the historical context of the society I grew up in (as described in project 1), is of a state that was being founded after the collective trauma of the Holocaust. Part of the efforts to create the individual and collective identity of my generation was to try and bind the individual to a greater 'whole'. The implicit and explicit attempts to foster loyalty towards the ideology simultaneously reinforced the sense of belonging to the society (to participate in building up the nation, and to contribute to the defense and development of the new state), yet it was also expected that we do not ask questions or undermine those expectations.

Whereas the sense of loyalty reinforces the feeling of belonging and unity, nevertheless it also contributes to highlighting those who are not included in the group. With regard to the sense of belonging to a group, Dalal claims that 'human groupings employ notions of "us" and "them" ' (2009, p. 75) and that people tend to perceive members within their group as more similar than they actually are, and to exaggerate the differences between those who are not part of the group, so that they seem more different than they actually are (ibid, p. 78). Thus, the process of inclusion entails a simultaneous process of exclusion.

This perception is supported by the findings of Elias and Scotson (1994) who researched the dynamics of the relationships which emerged between two communities, who lived in the same neighbourhood in England. The major difference between the two communities was that one ('the established') had a long history of living together and succeeded in building kinship networks between their families, as opposed to the other community who were new in the village ('the outsiders'). Although there were no socio-economic differences between the two groups, the 'established' group had created and demonstrated a sense of superiority over the newcomers and fuelled it with gossip. However, what constituted the 'us' and 'them' perception was that the 'outsider' community came to believe in their own inferior status. Displaying a unified façade (a cohesive 'we-identity' of superiority) by the 'established' group can also be described in terms of loyalty in which the established residents were urged to remain loyal to, and committed to maintaining their favourable balance of power over the newcomers. This research was presented in all the projects of this theses because it exemplified the 'us-them' split in all the narratives.

The narratives of projects 2,3 and 4 describe the development of inclusion and exclusion processes and the division between 'us' and 'them'. In project 3, a crisis of trust occurred between the management and employees over the management's intention to implement organisational changes. This led to the creation of two 'camps' – employees and management – and to the expectation that all the members of each group should be loyal to the group's agenda. The 'us' and 'them' perception was formed because each group had a shared interest that was distinct from the other group's agenda. It gave a false impression of cohesion and unity within each group, although some disagreements were raised within the groups. Being committed and loyal to the public voice of each group enhanced the feeling of togetherness and inclusion within the groups, and intensified the exclusion and disparity between the groups. Dalal (2009) argues that it is 'because of the impossibility of getting a hold of the essence of an 'us' that one focuses on the not-us. This focus helps sustain the illusion of substance and unity of an 'us' (p. 79). The experience of togetherness and the sense of loyalty to the group's ideology, vision or interest, influences the sense of 'self' being part of something greater. Yet, simultaneously, it hinders the ability to be critical of the positions held by other members of the group. This avoidance may be explained by the risk of being perceived as disloyal or of being excluded.

In the narratives of projects 2,3, and 4 the sense of loyalty towards the members of the group or the shared agenda blurred the readiness for internal reflection. For example, in project 2, as the mentors felt more confident in their loyalty to each other in their joint struggle against the management, they became more critical of the management's decision, but they avoided examining their own contribution as females to this gap. According to Sullivan (2000), their tendency to avoid doing so may be attributed to the notion that our individual habits are formed in part because we are influenced by gender norms that we have been exposed to that are unique to our specific cultural conditions. As such, they have become our taken-for-granted assumptions which guide, but also restrict, our gendered view. A similar pattern of avoiding having an open discourse on the sensitive relationships was also seen in project 4. The joint commitment to the success of the business and the mutual loyalty between the brothers made it difficult for them to hold an open and frank dialogue about sensitive issues such as their children's ability to take over management of the business in the future or to examine potential options that might change the balance of power between the two brothers. Repression of this dialogue can be explained by the fear that it could harm the fabric of their relationship that had been built up over the years.

From a more detached perspective, while attempting to conclude reflecting on my research journey, I am now more aware of my difficulty in exploring the social and political context of where I live. I rejected my supervisor's invitation to inquire into how the conflictual arena where I grew up and live has impacted on my perceptions on loyalty, disloyalty and betrayal. I experienced this request as a criticism of my state and as attempts to undermine my sense of loyalty to my country. I could not tolerate that an 'outsider', a 'stranger' would voice criticism of my country. Writing an autobiographical account and iteratively exploring the societal traditions, culture and school of thoughts that have informed my work practices, gradually enabled me to reflect critically on the assumptions of the cultures, disciplines and professional worlds that I have engaged in. It has allowed me to be more open to ask questions about the 'blind loyalty' I felt and to inquire into the 'dark sides' or unconscious and thereby non-reflective aspects of loyalty.

In the organisational reality, loyalty and disloyalty are tested and shaped particularly during breakdowns. Organisational and interpersonal breakdowns are situations which reveal our alliances and rivalries within the power relational dynamics in the organisation. Breakdowns are opportunities for the group members, with (and without) the help of the consultant, to examine their taken-for-granted assumptions (Brinkmann, 2014, p. 724) about their net of relational loyalties, to discover where their loyalties and disloyalties lie. Breakdowns are a source, and sometimes even a catalyst, for exploring the relationships between the various parties involved in the crisis. Furthermore, they enable us to explore alternative explanations to understand the puzzling and perplexing situations we experience (Brinkmann, 2012, p. 46). Drawing on Dewey's pragmatist approach:

We learn by doing because our world is a practical world, which we can only know through action. And our reflexive knowing of this world is necessitated by breakdowns of, and problems with, our activities. If we lived in a world in which our activities were never interrupted, then growth and learning would be impossible (Dewey 1934b, p. 59).

We become more aware of our social relationships, our ways of thinking, emotions and patterns of action when experiencing obstacles and disparity and when the 'natural flow in the world is interrupted' (Brinkmann, 2013, p. 164). The question of loyalty relationships is not usually examined in everyday life, only when we experience difficulty or a disruption of the social order, a puzzling situation or when conflicts arise.

The narratives intentionally chosen for this thesis are ones that describe breakdowns, based on the DMan programme's research approach, as described in the methodology section. All the change processes described in the narratives were planned to a certain extent. The assumptions regarding loyalty were tested in these cases, both implicitly and explicitly. The loyal relationships were re-shaped, and the inherent power struggles were revealed. Breakdowns in general, and breakdowns of loyalty in particular, evoke a wide spectrum of emotions as seen in the three narratives of this study: frustration and fury in project 2, anger and disappointment in project 3, and pain and anxiety in project 4. Emotions are associated with certain objects and gain meaning within the context they are experienced.

Moreover, they are sources of knowing and exploring human relationships and, as Dewey (1895) claims, an indication that something is not flowing smoothly. 'The emotion is, psychologically, the adjustment or tension of habit and ideal, and the organic changes in the body are the literal working out, in concrete terms, of the struggle of adjustment' (Dewey as quoted in Brinkmann, 2013, p. 102). Hochschild's term 'emotional labour' (1979) can be used to explain the difficulty in deciphering our emotions that begins from the moment we are born, when we internalise which emotions are acceptable, possible, expressible and how they should be expressed. A crisis of loyalty involves an emotional experience, even if this is not discussed openly.

With the exception of one narrative, the sense of loyalty was not openly discussed by participants in the interactions between the involved parties. Only in the crisis of trust between the management and employees in project 3 did one of the managers describe the employees' unionising initiative as betrayal and disloyalty. Yet, the sense of crisis in the narratives clarified to the involved parties who were and who were not their allies, who was included on their side and who was excluded. The responsive processes during breakdowns are expressions which can also be understood as part of the power struggles between the involved parties. Different ideologies, interests and agendas as well as differences in power relations may be the source of a conflict or a breakdown and may generate or accelerate a crisis of loyalty. This was illustrated in project 4, when the two siblings had different intentions or agendas regarding the business' succession (e.g., different approaches about their degree of control and involvement in managing the day to day operations of the business, when appointing a new CEO). This led to an eruption of emotion and a breakdown that expressed conflicting loyalties: to the founding father's legacy, their children and senior managers, and even between the two brothers. A crisis of loyalty does not only lead to identifying alliances (who is included and who is not), but also it may even lead to actions and decisions, as seen in the various projects. As examples of consequences, it might lead people to leave the organisation, to get involved in a struggle for promoting a particular goal, to encourage employees to unionise or to stop an organisational change (e.g., a succession process).

Consulting is a field in which conflicts in general, and conflicts of loyalty in particular, that members of an organisation experience, are often encountered. In certain cases, as a consultant, by challenging the taken-for-granted assumptions which underlie the consultees' thoughts, feelings and decisions, breakdowns erupt or are even amplified (Stacy and Griffin, 2005, p. 139). The next argument will elaborate on the consulting work within the arena of conflict of loyalties.

Argument 3: The consultant, who practices within the arena of the consultee's dynamic and conflicting loyalties, can offer a joint reflexive exploration, which may help in understanding the emergent configuration of their loyalties. This process can enable the members of organisations to take account of the plurality of interests in their thinking and practice. Yet, in a parallel process, the consultant is called upon to explore and interpret his/her own emerging loyalties and how they are impacted by and impact the consulting processes.

The organisation can be viewed as an arena of competing loyalties. Being members of diverse groups inside and outside the organisation, affiliated to a variety of groups of interests and different professional orientations, inevitably impacts the dynamic relationships among employees and evokes a conflict of loyalties. Dalal (2009) classified the various groups we are part of into two categories: fundamental or root groups (e.g., our family, or an extended community as our nation) or 'spontaneous', or 'contingent groups' which are made by us (p. 74). Dalal notes that although this distinction is prevalent, all groups that we belong to are, in a sense, 'not only "made", but also continually in a process of being "made"' (ibid, p. 75). The narratives of this research reveal that being simultaneously members of different groups (root or spontaneous) evokes a conflict of loyalties (Kleinig, 2014) which is an inherent, unavoidable part of the group members' experiences.

The consultant operates within the field of competing loyalties, becomes a player in the political processes of relating within this sphere, and experiences loyalties and conflicts of loyalties with the other parties involved in the consulting practice: the contractor, the CEO and management, the direct consultees, additional consultants who work in the organisation, etc. The consultant has to deal with ethical issues concerning loyalty within

this arena. Questions arise such as: What is the role of the consultant within an arena of multiple loyalties? How does the consultant practice with skill and ethics within an arena of conflicting, contradictory loyalties? Furthermore, to what extent are the consultant's own experiences of loyalty impacted by and impact the consulting processes?

To clarify these questions, I will briefly outline the major approaches that formed the basis of my consulting work (e.g., the process consultation perspective developed by Schein [1987] and the appreciative inquiry approach formulated by Cooperrider and Srivastva [1987]). I will then take a reflective and critical view based on the perspective of complex responsive processes of relating and discuss the questions of loyalty with regard to my consulting work.

Edgar Schein, a social psychologist, is an important contributor to the Organisational Development (OD) school of thought, and he had a significant influence on my practice as an organisational consultant. Schein proposes three models of consultation: the expert, the doctor-patient relationship and the process consultation. The three models differ in the degrees of involvement and responsibilities that the consultant and the client share while working on the client's developmental needs. Whereas in the first model, the consultant provides his expertise to the client's defined need, in the second model the client is involved in identifying the 'sick' areas, yet the consultant is responsible as the doctor for diagnosing the problems and recommending treatments and solutions. In the third model, 'process consultation', which is Schein's preferred model, the organisational development is based on a joint diagnosis of the consultant and the client and the organisational intervention is the responsibility of the client, while the consultant is expected to support and help in this process (1969, p. 6-7; 1987, p. 29).

The underlying assumptions of process consultation are: organisations are healthy, unhealthy or 'could probably be more effective' (Schein, 1969, p.5), if they could identify what processes need improvement; prior to any intervention or action plan there must be 'a thorough diagnosis and assessment of the strengths and weaknesses' (ibid, p. 8) of the current organisational situation; members of the organisation are likely to know far more about their organisation than a new consultant; and an active involvement of the client in

defining the problem and generating a 'remedy' is critical for becoming the owner of the change process and for developing his/her capability for coping with the organisation's ongoing challenges.

I previously believed that as a process consultant, I am a 'sociotherapist' (in Schein's terms, *ibid*, p. 133), who aims to help the organisation enhance its capacity to learn and improve continuously from self-diagnosis and self-intervention (*ibid*, p. 135). A major emphasis in enacting my role, in alignment with Schein's advice (1995. P.18), has been to establish a trusting helping relationship with the client. Underpinning this consulting relationship is the notion that the particular problem is less important than the relationship between consultant and consultee and that the client is the one who can 'create the right scenes and manage the process towards desirable outcomes' (Schein, 1987, p. 83). Furthermore, the process consultant, while forcing the client to take a center stage in acting out the 'solutions', has to stay 'in the audience role, watching with interest and supporting the efforts of the client as actor to solve his own problem' (*ibid*). Thus, the consultant can choose to act outside the organisational 'boundary' and the political game.

Since joining the DMan programme and being exposed to the perspective of complex responsive processes of relating, I am now more aware of my previous attempts to position myself outside of the 'problems', pretending that I was an outsider, a scientific observer of the dynamic relations within the group. In retrospect, I believed that by being detached, I could be in a better position to help diagnose what was happening in the day-to-day interactions between people and to recommend how to proceed. Moreover, I believed that my consultees would perceive me as being above politics and my recommendations would be assessed as being free of any interests.

Reflecting on the three narratives of projects 2, 3 and 4, I realised that although I was an external consultant, I was not detached from the concerns, dilemmas or problems of the groups' members (e.g., gender inequality, Labour Unions' interference in labour relations and the overriding importance of the value of family). On the contrary, while taking a more reflexive analysis, I understood that I had become a part of their power struggles, experiencing our shared conflict of loyalties and influencing and being influenced by the

occurrences within the teams of consultees. In hindsight, I am now aware that in my role as consultant, as manifested in all the narratives in this study; I am neither detached nor separated from the matter at hand, nor from the consultee. I realise that as a consultant, I am actively engaged in the consultee's political life, I become a temporary co-participant in the organisational discussions, explicitly or implicitly involved in the dynamics of their conflicts of loyalties (Mowles, 2009) and may even be caught up in the group's habitual patterning (e.g., the tendency towards a binary perception of loyalty versus disloyalty).

Moreover, most of my consulting practice is characterised by long-term involvement in processes. In such consulting work, loyalties are unavoidably emerging and being developed over time with various groups. There is a likelihood that some could see me as being identified with a certain group, or I could find myself identifying with a certain group (for example, the management). While being close to my clients is of value in trying to find out the difficulties and dilemmas they face, at the same time, it also limits my ability to understand the multiple facets of the clients' difficulty and to identify the blind spots, since I have become part of the clients' habitual working patterns. Being aware of the fact that my involvement in the relational processes with the clients is unavoidable, as a consultant I am required to create and negotiate an ongoing movement between involvement and detachment and to be aware of the negotiation process. This arises out of the understanding that involvement and detachment are not 'two independent sets of phenomena' but rather a 'continuum that lies between these marginal poles that presents the principal problem' (Elias, 1956, p. 227).

Conducting a dialogue with the consultee about what is bothering him or her requires the consultant to have a detached involvement which can enable both the consultant and the client 'to reflect on different courses of action that we might take and assess their consequences in relation to others so that we might exercise self-restraint' (Mowles, 2011, p. 43). In this light, loyalty or disloyalty relationships between the consultant and the consultee do not constitute either involvement or detachment, but paradoxically these relationships form the ability to build relationships based on close alliances, while simultaneously having the ability to create distance and separation.

An additional perspective which has also impacted my practice and my past assumptions about loyalty (similar to Schein and other OD scholars; Schein, 1999, p. 56) is Appreciative Inquiry (AI). The AI approach was formulated by Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) and is based on the perception that by enquiring into the good (e.g., the individual's or group's strengths, the organisation's successful achievements or desired future goals), one can bring about good. The AI method draws on the tradition of humanistic psychology and suggests that 'Inquiry into the social potential of a social system should begin with appreciation, should be collaborative, should be provocative, and should be applicable' (Bushe, 2011, p. 87). Moreover, the assumptions underlying the AI approach are that 'what gives "life" to a living system when it is most alive, most effective, and most constructively capable' 'strengthens a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential' (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2000, pp. 69-70).

AI is based on the systems theory that view the organisation as a 'whole' or as a system made up of different sub-systems. As such, the managers' challenge is to propel the organisation and its employees to gain a greater harmony among its parts and with its changing environment, to ensure that the organisation is working as a whole. Accordingly, the consultant's role is to help the managers create a compelling vision, which would capture the ideal future, and design appropriate organisational mechanisms to obtain it (Mowles, 2011, pp. 4-5). Enhancing a sense of loyalty among the group's members can be viewed as an instrumental process aimed at increasing harmony. Consequently, asking questions about conflicts may create more conflicts, or disturb the harmony, whereas inquiring about the life-giving properties of the organisation may create vitality and positive changes in the future.

With hindsight, I now realise that my perception of the value of loyalty was influenced by the AI perspective and I perceived loyalty as an idealised quality. I believed that by nurturing a sense of loyalty, as if it were an organisational 'property', members of the organisation would feel they were part of a greater whole. Such a position would enable them to cope with future challenges and lessen potential conflicts that might harm the sense of loyalty. As I gained more experience as a consultant, and based on this research, I now understand that loyalty among people can be portrayed as a social process which does not have one social

configuration, but rather, by its nature, is context dependent, fluctuating and unavoidably entails experience of conflicts.

In my practice as a consultant, when I am simultaneously involved with the various members of the organisation, to varying degrees of affiliation, the question of loyalty evokes professional and ethical dilemmas. I am expected to help clients explore and understand the problem facing them or their organisation, and assist them in thinking about ideas and ways to deal with it. I meet the client at various stages of organisational life: attempts to promote a certain agenda (e.g. management development for its management cadre, design a change process); or when confronting an organisational or management crisis. In these consultations, diverse organisational and social issues arise and they often evoke questions about deeply ingrained patterns of thinking or action in the organisation (e.g., the meaning of gender equality in practice, an organisational structure change as a catalyst to enhance innovative culture, or promotion managers from within or outside the business). Discussing these questions with the various involved parties, on the one hand, could lead to new insights, broaden their understanding of the particular situation or problem, yet, on the other hand, it could be perceived as criticism or an undermining of existing paradigms and an exposure of unspoken emotions.

Within the context of organisational breakdowns, consultants are confronted with multiple and conflicting interests and expectations from the various players. Those conflictual situations reflect inter- and intra-group power struggles in the organisation, an unavoidable aspect when people are working together. Drawing on Elias' perspective on power, which views the organisation as a 'constant patterning and interweaving of intentions which express power relationships', the consultant 'temporarily joins and contributes to this patterning' (Mowles, 2011, p. 51). When the consultant points out the multiple competing loyalties and the different points of view of the involved staff in the particular situation and invites them to collaboratively explore their varied agendas, this may help the group's members to better understand the dynamic relationships among them and thus promote their shared task. This may then clearly expose the loyalty and disloyalty configurations between the individuals, the otherness and differences within and between the groups.

However, this entails the risk that it may also ‘fan the flames’, deepen the factionalism of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ within the organisation and may harm the sense of unity and loyalty.

Viewing the consultant’s role as one who invites the group members to present their multiple and conflicting perspectives about the issues under discussion, differs from the prevailing approach that views loyalty to be unity of opinions and the absence of disagreements, a perspective that I also followed. As an organisational consultant, I viewed my role as a mediator who reconciles conflicting positions, fosters ‘harmony’ and thus contributes to reinforcing the sense of loyalty among the involved parties. I now recognise that on the one hand, I practice within the political field with its accompanying constraints. Yet, on the other hand, by taking a more detached view, I am now more aware of the potential to be found within multiple points of view. In her article ‘To Save a Jewish Homeland’, Hannah Arendt, the German-American political philosopher, coined the term ‘loyal opposition’ in which she argues about the importance of public debate on conflicting opinions as opposed to ideological unanimity (Arendt, 2007, pp. 393-394). In her view, plurality, the ability to share different perspectives on our common world in the ‘public realm’, is an important condition of human action and coexistence (Arendt, 1958). Drawing on Arendt’s idea of ‘loyal opposition’ provokes questions regarding the taken-for-granted loyalty relationships between the consultant and the client and encourages discussions about the very practical questions on how we bring plurality into the consulting relational processes. As consultants, we are invited to show a high degree of loyalty towards our clients, yet, on most occasions the meanings we ascribe to those loyalties between the two of us are not discussed explicitly. As consultants, we are expected to jointly explore with the clients the existing diverse perspectives on their defined problems or needs. This inquiry process is, on the one hand, an opportunity to provoke asking the unasked questions, to encourage expressing diverse including suppressed and critical voices, to articulate the unthinkable ideas, yet, at the same time, it might evoke uncertainty and be a threat, which undermines the ‘ideological unanimity’.

Arendt’s idea of ‘loyal opposition’ proposes an alternative option of viewing the relationships of loyalty among people in general, and between the consultant and client in particular. Whereas the pervasive mainstream perception views loyalty as unity of opinion

and as a binary state, and the role of the consultant 'to connect up the parts, to form a coherent whole' (Mowles, 2011, p. 39), an Arendtian view of loyalty between the consultant and the client would be different. According to Arendt's argument, the consultant-client relationship can be viewed as an invitation to embark on a shared discovery and an opportunity for sense-making that encourages a multiplicity of viewpoints, including the consultant's viewpoint. Such a process legitimises differences and recognises that opposing views exist. In addition, it is likely that a multi-perspective dialogue will lead to innovation. This does not ignore the danger that splits or factions could be formed or uncovered or new conflicts could come into being.

Contributions of this Thesis

This reflexive research has enabled me to explore and understand the dynamics of the relationships among members of organisations through the prism of the sense of loyalty and the evolving relationships between them and myself as their organisational consultant. Based on collaborative auto-ethnographical accounts, the analysis of the projects and the synopsis, I have found that the insights I gained during my research are relevant, mainly for OD consultants, who practice within the arena of conflicting loyalties. Conflicts that reflect competing expectations of the various parties in the consulting processes (e.g., the contractor, the management, the direct consultee's group), or mirror power struggles or a disparity of interests among those who are engaged in organisational change processes (as illustrated in projects 2, 3 and 4). My research insights are relevant for organisational consultants who practice in Israel, and also often worldwide, based on the responses of resonance, I have received from my learning set and from colleagues in the DMan's wider community and from work colleagues around the world, I have consulted in various settings.

My thesis' observations may also resonate with Human Resources (HR) practitioners, who serve various external and internal stakeholders (e.g., investors, managers, and employees), and who are confronted with the need 'to exceed managers and employees expectations' (Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005, p. 10). HR practitioners are expected to operate within the tension that exists between the requirements to help management achieve the

organisation's goals and the need to respect and promote the interests of the people working in the organisation (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020, p. 3). The question of loyalty frequently tests HR practitioners in their practice.

My thesis could contribute to strands of organisational literature in the fields of organisational behaviour, human resource management and management studies (including a range of peer-reviewed journals, that served as a literature source in my research, such as Academy of Management Review, Journal of Management Studies, The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science and Harvard Business Review magazine). This strand of literature comprises and interlaces theoretical, empirical and practical perspectives on organisational and management studies. However, my research proposes a radical challenge to conventional discourse on loyalty relations, highlights the complexity of the experience of loyalty and reframes the role of consultant.

Below, I will describe the contributions of this thesis to knowledge and practice, as the academic tradition demands. However, drawing on Dewey's pragmatic perspective, our knowledge is developed through practice (human experiences) and a division between knowledge and practice is 'built upon a false dichotomy that its proposed mutual exclusivities' (Brinkmann, 2013, p. 5). The contributions to knowledge and to practices will be presented in two separate sections, while acknowledging that they are intertwined.

Contribution to Knowledge

In this section, I will focus on three main key contributions which offer a view of the experience of loyalty that differs from most contemporary organisational literature. These insights challenge the common view of loyalty as a causal and binary concept and highlight the complexity entails in loyal relations.

[Rethinking the experience of loyalty in organisations drawing on the perspective of complex responsive processes of relating](#)

The literature on loyalty in the workplace portrays a loyal employee as one who continues to work in the organisation over a long period of time (e.g., Powers, 2000), who shows

willingness to exert additional effort to achieve the goals and objectives of the organisation (Adler and Adler, 1988) and makes sacrifices for the sake of the employer (Alvesson, 2000). The management literature also lists practices that employers apply in order for employees to remain in (or not to leave) the organisations. This approach emphasises loyalty as an individual experience in a social context (the workplace) and assumes that the relationship is instrumental: what does a manager have to do to reinforce the employee-organisational relationship?

My research proposes a different view on employees' sense of loyalty: it is neither a property of the individual (e.g., a trait) nor a static position, but rather it is an evolving social and relational process experienced by the individuals while they are interacting with each other. Loyalty expresses affiliations among people and reflects additional social relational facets, such as the sense of belonging, conflicts and power relations. This view emphasises that the sense of loyalty is a social and responsive process that emerges and shifts due to changes in the group, yet, it is experienced by each individual as well. It is experienced individually but it plays out in the group we are belong to. The study accentuates the paradoxical and dialectic tension inherent in this experience between the social and the self.

My research also highlights the understanding that the sense of loyalty among people is not binary (you are either loyal or disloyal), as described in the literature (e.g., Hirschman, 1970), but rather it is an experience that expresses a wide spectrum of feelings and reactions in varying degrees of intensity and with different nuances. Despite my awareness of this dichotomous tendency, I still found myself falling into the trap and examining my consulting practice (for example in project 4) according to this division at specific moments. So I argue that you have to keep reminding yourself that loyalty is a changeable expression of the attachment and detachment between people in different situations, in diverse social contexts.

[A critical view on the idealisation of loyalty within organisations](#)

Management literature places great emphasis on the positive value of employee loyalty to the organisation (i.e., retention and not leaving) since it enables the organisation to preserve knowledge (Smith and Rupp, 2002), gain a competitive advantage and a higher

rate of survival (Aityan and Gupta, 2012) and to activate the unsatisfied voices which would 'try to remedy the defects' (Hirschman, 1970, p. 78). When I began this reflexive research, I believed that employee loyalty was a commendable value, and as a HR manager and consultant I invested much effort in reinforcing the sense of loyalty. My working assumption was that the more employees are connected to the company vision, and the more they feel their work contributes to the realisation of the organisational vision, the more their sense of loyalty to the organisation will increase, a perception that was challenged in this research.

Furthermore, although the research literature (Kleinig, 2017) tends to present the positive value of organisational loyalty that binds people together for the good of a common goal, this thesis substantiates the argument that is not necessarily solely a virtue. My inquiry into the narratives drew attention to the darker side of loyalty which involve problematic and ethical aspects such as ('us' versus 'them'); exclusion of the 'other(s)'; and a fear of confronting, criticising and opposing the dominant position, including the difficulty of presenting an opposing approach and the social pressure involved in taking a clear stand against the other group. Viewing loyalty as the absence of disagreements, as I tended to in the past, obscures the diverse and multiple perspectives that members of a group have.

In this the thesis I have also tried to show the complexity and dynamic nature of the sense of loyalty among members of the organisation. There is no one form of loyalty or disloyalty. In this research, I argue that the sense of loyalty among people may be described as loyalty configurations that evolve in varying social circumstances. My understanding that loyalty relationships involve conflicts deepened as this study progressed. And I have become acutely aware that conflicts of loyalty are an unavoidable part of social and organisational behaviour. As people, we are members of various groups and have to cope with conflicting expectations, that confront us with conflicts of loyalties. In this sense, loyalty relations reflect power relations within the organisation, and are entangled with political processes such as inclusion versus exclusion (Stacey and Mowles, 2016) and emotional labour (e.g., dealing with which feelings are legitimate to express, to whom and when, Hochschild, 1979).

[Exploring loyal relationships as a research method for understanding inter- and intra- group affiliations](#)

The experiences of loyalty as described in this research are mostly not openly discussed as they occur during the interpersonal interactions. They are often interpreted in retrospect. Exploring loyalty in inter- and intra-group affiliations is an additional way of understanding relationships among the organisation's members: to identify who is loyal to whom? And who is not? What is the nature of loyalty relationships among the organisation's members (e.g. agreement and suppression of opposing opinions, partnership in the struggle to promote an agenda, opposition to other voices)? How is loyalty expressed? To what extent do loyalty relationships reflect the power struggle in the organisation? What is the consultant's role in the arena of conflicting loyalties? This exploration is even intensified in times of crisis and breakdowns.

Organisational and interpersonal breakdowns are opportunities for exploring loyalty and disloyalty experiences among people and they enable us to examine the assumptions that form the basis of the sense of loyalty (as in argument 2). Furthermore, breakdowns evoke a wide range of emotions among people which can serve as a source of exploring the relationships and as indication that something is not flowing smoothly (Dewey, 1895). This study highlights the fact that breakdowns are a catalyst for inquiring into loyalty relationships, as well as other aspects of interpersonal relationships (e.g., conflicts, inclusion and exclusion processes, the freedom or suppression to express emotions).

The auto-ethnographical method used in this research is based on the narrative inquiry. These narratives are taken from the day to day interactions of the members of the organisation, in which the researcher (the consultant) is also involved. As such, the experience of loyalty is dependent on the cultural-social context. My historical, social-cultural background as a researcher, as described in project 1, illustrates the central importance that the society I grew up in attributes to loyalty, and how my consulting perspective (as well as my other social values) was formed by this environment.

Exploring the meanings that members of organisations and consultants attach to their sense of loyalty may contribute to understanding the relationships and the ways in which

members react in various situations (on occasions such as, when an employee or a manager resigns, or incorporating a new manager who did not progress from within the organisation). This exploration is relevant for any organisation in which the members have a history of working together, mutual expectations and future aspirations. It may be even more relevant in the context of global organisations whose employees come from diverse cultural and social backgrounds, in which the meaning of loyalty may differ.

Initiating a reflexive discourse among staff members about the meanings they ascribe to loyalty may contribute to a better understanding of their diverse agendas and mutual expectations while working together.

I will further elaborate on this aspect in the next section on contribution to practice.

[Contribution to Practice](#)

This section is divided into two sub-sections: the first is a summary on how my practice was evolved during this research process. The following sub-section portrays how my research may contribute to the wider community of practice.

[Development of my practice](#)

Having explored the theme of loyalty within organisations over the last three years, as part of the DMan programme, I have become aware of the considerable importance I have ascribed to the social attribute of relationships of loyalty in my consulting work. While taking part in this programme, I have continued my practice as an organisational consultant, which allowed me to analyse consultations I was involved in, as they happened or shortly afterwards. The goal of this section is to reflect on how my practice has changed and what meanings I give, at this point, to my role as an organisational consultant. However, it is important to state that the changes in my practice are not an indication of a linear, structured and methodical change that occurred during my time at the DMan programme. Looking back reflectively on the changes in my ways of thinking and practice during this time, I realise that I have become more aware of my tendencies in my consulting practice (such as avoiding conflict, partiality to the management side) but in complex, uneven and sometimes paradoxical ways. I recognised that as a consultant I simultaneously influence

and am influenced by the interpersonal interactions in the consulting processes. I am now more aware that these processes, serve as a 'hall of mirrors' (in Foulkes' term, 1964) enabling me to see the multiplicity of the reflected relationships.

My OD consulting work had mainly been based on systems theories (e.g., Bertalanffy, 1968; Katz and Kahn, 1966; Senge, 1990), the process consultation approach (Schein, 1969) and humanistic psychology theories (e.g. Maslow, 1954; Peters and Waterman, 1982; Senge, 1990 and Collins and Porras, 2002; Schein, 2010) as described in project 1. Being part of the community of inquirers in the DMan programme, which is based on the complex responsive processes of relating school of thought, encouraged me to inquire into relationships of loyalty in organisations as experienced by people in their everyday interactions and not as an abstract concept. The experience of loyalty among people in this research was explored from a multi-perspective approach that included sociology, anthropology, social psychology and philosophy, which enriched my analysis and enabled me to critically challenge my views and taken-for-granted assumptions.

Drawing on Elias' (2001) process sociology theory (which is one of the foundations of the perspective of complex responsive processes of relating), has inspired me to explore the theme of loyalty from two paradoxical perspectives: the 'airman' and the 'swimmer' (as described in my previous projects). According to Elias (2001, p. 47) the 'airman' point of view means to explore our social life from 'the long course of historical changes and the way we are forming and are formed by them' (Mowles, 2015, p. 259), a perspective which helps us gain a somewhat detached view. Yet, Elias claims that 'only by adopting the perspective of the 'swimmer', who is obliged to take action in the moment itself..... we might create opportunities to bring about outcomes of a different kind' (ibid). Elias' approach emphasises a movement between historical, contextual, distant observation and present-time observation as it evolves, observing the particular nuances (Elias, 2001, p. 47). The distinction between these two perspectives, and moving along the continuum from involvement to detachment, have enabled me to reflect on the changes in my perspectives about loyalty in organisations. In addition, I have embraced these perspectives as a consulting method in my practice, allowing me to explore the entire spectrum of inter- and intra- relationships in organisations and between them and myself as their consultant.

Looking back retrospectively, from the perspective of the 'airman' and from a reflexive view, I am able to identify the change in my perceptions about loyalty relationships in organisations, and the ramifications these perceptions have on my practice. When I first began working as a consultant, I experienced loyalty to whichever organisation I was working for – 'the whole' – as a value that has to be fostered among the employees. I initiated and designed programmes aimed at strengthening the organisation-employee affiliation. The employee's loyalty was considered an individual trait and measured against how long the employee remained with the organisation. My role, and that of other managers, was to actualise the management's policy and to ensure organisational stability through employee retention programmes. As a consultant, I now try to examine loyalty relationships as a social researcher, not in terms of good or bad, or through a binary view (i.e., either loyal or disloyal) or from an instrumentalist perspective (i.e., how to enhance voice and reduce exit, in Hirshman's terms, 1970). As a social researcher, I now understand loyalty in terms of the socio-political relationships among the members of the organisation (e.g., the power relationships, the splits between 'us' and 'them'), their cult values and the 'we identity' and to learn about the emerging relationships between me as a consultant and the consultees.

The paradox of trying to pursue the two perspectives – 'airman' and 'swimmer', at the same time, enabled me to examine the sense of loyalty within a wider context than the particular organisational event. For example, in project 4, when I was consulting to the brothers who jointly owned the family business, the question of loyalty between them focused on their examining the future succession of the business. Drawing on the 'airman' perspective, the consulting process expanded and adopted a more detached point of view for learning about their family background and about their father who bequeathed the business to them, as well as to examining the key place of family business in Israel's economy and the value of family in the society we live in. Concurrently, the consulting practice focused on the attempt to understand the brothers' dialogue from the 'swimmer's' perspective: to explore the emotional reactions of the brothers and mine that arose during the joint meetings and to reflect on the decision-making patterns as they occurred.

In my consulting practice, I now incorporate both the 'airman' and the 'swimmer' paradoxical perspectives and invite my client to do likewise. For example, recently, when consulting to the management of an Israeli company that had been acquired by a German company, I noticed that the discussions on the post-merger integration problems evoked intense emotional reactions among the management members. When inviting the team to reflect on their emotional disagreements, the team members realised that part of their anger and painful feelings stemmed from the knowledge that they had been bought out by a German company. The reflective dialogue enabled the management to talk about the loss of independence they had as a company, and at the same time to talk about the pain of an Israeli company being acquired by a German conglomerate. By talking among themselves, personal recollections and the collective national trauma of the Holocaust surfaced. The group's ability to reflect on these feelings from two perspectives – the 'airman' (the wider historical context and to be more detached) and the 'swimmer' (being bought out and the emotions it provoked) enabled the group members to understand their difficulty in receiving orders and functioning within the new configuration.

This narrative highlights an additional contribution of my research to my practice: reflection and reflexivity inquiry and the value of recognising emotions in the consulting work. A reflexive analysis relying on narratives inquiry, that forms the basis of this thesis, enabled me (and others) to learn about how people in an organisation experience loyalty or disloyalty (e.g., as closeness, partnership, factions), about the emotions involved in these experiences, about expectations and about the implications of this experience on relationships. The iterative analysis, with the help and support of my learning set, gave me a more detached perspective and made me more aware of the predispositions and assumptions that I had relating to loyalty. For many years, I had believed that a strong sense of loyalty leads to harmony and enhances better teamwork (as mentioned in Project 1), or that resignation means disloyalty to others (an interpretation that I gave to one of the mentors leaving the company in Project 2) or that the meaning of loyalty is the absence of disagreements. Taking several reflexive turns of analysis in each narrative in this research, helped by my learning set, gave me the opportunity to reveal the taken-for-granted assumptions of my perception on loyalty, assumptions which have affected the ways I observed and interpreted loyalty relationships. As I have become more sensitive to unveiling

my predispositions in my consulting work, I have also become more persistent in inviting my clients to a reflexive inquiry, exploring their taken-for-granted assumptions and reflecting upon their ways of working together and how these patterns contribute to what they are experiencing. Examining and sharing narratives from their everyday practices, in a more detached involvement manner (in Elias' terms, 1987) have become a significant consulting methodology in my practice, which helps to enhance the reflexive inquiry and to conceive new possibilities for working together. Yet this kind of invitation may be perceived in some cases by my client(s) as a manifestation of disloyalty to our pre-defined consulting goals or even may be rejected by my client(s), who could perceive such an invitation to a reflexive inquiry as a threat to their position of power.

Being more attentive to the explicit and implicit emotional reactions of my clients, during our meetings, and drawing their (and my) attention to the expressive emotions, serve us as 'data' for revealing patterns of relating among the involved parties. The emergence of strong feelings may be an indication of the importance that members of the organisation ascribe to the subject under discussion. I find that a joint reflexive inquiry makes a significant contribution to the client(s) being in the 'here and now' and at the same time trying to understand the meaning of these emotional reactions.

An additional insight that this research has given to my consulting practice is the understanding that loyalty relationships in organisations are a reflection of power struggles. This was seen in the narratives: struggles concerning gender, employee/management or the brothers' control. For many years, I perceived my role as a consultant to be a mediator between the political figures in an organisation. I perceived conflicts to be a 'disturbance' in cultivating organisational harmony. Being aware of my difficulty to function easily within political conflicts (e.g., labour unions versus management), I tried to find ways to avoid or to smooth over those conflictual situations. Recently, following a comment from a colleague who occasionally co-consults with me, I have realised that I am now more willing to encourage discussions on conflicts and disagreements. Furthermore, I can now tolerate situations in which people feel a sense of disloyalty, without indulging my tendency to blur the disagreements or my urge to create harmonious relationships. Acknowledging that power struggles are inevitably processes within organisations, I found that by being more

aware of my inclination to escape dealing with conflicts, and by taking a 'detour via detachment' (in Elias terms, 1987, p. 6), I more frequently invite my clients to explore the emerged conflicts reflexively. Yet, I cannot boast that I have banished conflict avoidance entirely, rather I claim that there has been a shift in my practice so that I can now facilitate people to discuss disloyalties. Colleagues and clients, with whom I have long-term relationships, have noticed and informed me, on different occasions, that my consulting interventions have become more pro-active in terms of encouraging them to consider and share about how they are thinking about their actions and inspire them to debate diverse perspectives on the issue being discussed. All this, without compromising on my responsibility to create safe and conditions that enable co-working.

[Contribution to the wider community of practice](#)

The implications of my research may make a contribution to the wider community of practice, mainly to organisational development (OD) consultants and HR practitioners. I will address those insights, focusing primarily on the practice of consultancy.

First, drawing on the insights of this research which view employees' sense of loyalty as an evolving social and relational process, can serve a prism for consultants as they inquire into the dynamic relationships among the members of the client's organisation (in addition to other points of view such as competition, collaboration, or power relations). Furthermore, to explore the loyalty relations between him/her and the consultee(s), this approach invites the consultant to study those relationships not from a causality or binary approach (e.g., loyal/disloyal, good/bad), but, rather from a more complex perspective which entails, among other perspectives, the contextual aspects, the emotional responsive processes, the emerged and changeable reactions and the ethical dilemmas. Such a social perspective encourages the consultant to examine the socio-political relationships among the members of the organisation and to reflect on the complex loyalty relations between the consultant and the consultee.

Second, as opposed to the dominant description of organisational consultants as neutral objective observers who stand beyond the consultee's political interactions, this research demonstrates that the consultants are social actors who have their own predispositions,

and habitual ways of thinking and doing. The consultants are players among other actors who are influenced by and influence the interactions with the consultees.

From the point of view of the consulting practice, the more consultants are aware of their own taken-for-granted assumptions, which affect the ways they observe and interpret the organisational processes and the social relationships of their consultees (including their relational involvement), the more those consultants would be able to enrich the interpretation perspectives of the inquired experiences. Furthermore, inviting the clients to a reflexive inquiry, exploring their taken-for-granted assumptions and reflecting upon their ways of working together can contribute to their awareness of what they are experiencing in relation to others.

Third, the perspective of complex responsive processes of relating ascribes a central role to paradox, as described in my thesis (e.g., projects 3 and 4). Paradoxes as self versus social, involvement versus detachment and the 'airman' versus the 'swimmer' perspectives enabled me to reflect on my role as a consultant, to explore and deepen my understanding about loyalty relationships within organisations. As such, I argue that embracing the paradox notion to understand the complexity of human actions when people work together may enable the consultant to explore the entire spectrum of inter- and intra- relationships in organisations and between the consultees and the consultant themselves, as well as to explore the inquired theme (e.g., loyalty) within a wider context than the particular organisational event.

Fourth, acknowledging that power struggles are inevitably processes within organisations, and that conflicts are unavoidable social processes within organisational life, the consultant has to be aware of his/her toleration of dealing with conflicts and from a detached point of view to invite his/her clients to explore and discuss the emerged conflicts reflexively. Being more pro-active in terms of encouraging the consultees to consider and share about how they are thinking about their actions and inspire them to debate diverse perspectives on the issue being discussed can help generate new ways of working together, and yet, can deepen factionalism and disloyalty experiences.

Fifth, examining and sharing narratives from the consultees' everyday practices, in a more detached involvement manner (in Elias' terms, 1987) can serve as a significant consulting methodology, to enhance the reflexive inquiry and conceive new possibilities for working together. Yet this kind of invitation by the consultant may be perceived in some cases by the client(s) as a manifestation of disloyalty to the pre-defined consulting goals or may even be rejected by the client(s), who could perceive such an invitation to a reflexive inquiry as a threat to their position of power. The narrative inquiry method may evoke emotional responses. Yet, paying attention to the explicit and implicit expressive emotions of the involved parties (including the consultant) can serve as 'data' for revealing patterns of relating and can be helpful for the consultants and their consultees to make sense of their experiences.

Further Research

This thesis explores loyalty relationships among members of organisations, including the relationships woven within the consulting practice. The research attempts to confront the issue of loyalty from a different angle than that found in more traditional organisational literature. As such, it examines loyalty relations not from an individualistic perspective nor a functionalist view but rather as a dynamic relational process that evolves while people are working together.

Nevertheless, these research conclusions do not claim to represent universal generalisation, nor to be the absolute truth. They present insights based on an in-depth inquiry into real life experiences in consulting relationships that are likely to resonate across a broad range of contexts. The research was analysed from my perspective as an auto-ethnographer, in my role as an OD consultant in the private sector in Israel, and therefore the insights are of particular relevance for this organisational sector. Every research is by nature constrained and limited. Therefore, there are still various research directions that might be pursued in order to expand the understanding of loyalty relationships with the organisation.

During the process of this research, the Covid-19 pandemic erupted (2020-2021), an event that is mentioned in the introduction to the thesis. The ramifications of the pandemic were not only felt in the working configurations (e.g., remote work from home or hybrid working models), but also, in the overwhelming sense of employment uncertainty and feelings of social isolation. Questions about employee-organisation loyalty relationships became more acute. This extreme period of time is in a sense a unique window of opportunity to examine loyalty relations within a major worldwide breakdown that affects so many aspects of our lives. Applying the narrative inquiry research method may be of value in shedding light on peoples' experiences. In addition, it would be worthwhile to further examine ethical aspects of loyalty relations of employers to their employees in this turbulent situation.

The primary focus of this study was on loyalty relationships, and less attention was directed to disloyal relationships (although in each project, concerns about disloyalty were expressed). Future research is needed to gain a better understanding of disloyal

relationships among members of organisations in their day-to-day interactions. Above all, further research is called for to explore the senses, processes and meanings of betrayal in different contexts. Examining such contrasting themes, may be beneficial in deepening our understanding into loyalty relationships. However, this exploration should be pursued with caution in order to avoid binary or limiting ways of thinking. The theme of loyalty relationships should be understood not only within the contradictory constructs (e.g. disloyalty and betrayal), but also through interfacing and overlapping concepts such as: belonging, power relations, inclusion/exclusion processes, gender, identity and emotions, which were also explored this research. However, additional themes, such as integrity and trust could be taken into account in future research to see how they relate to loyalty.

Furthermore, this study researched consulting events that took place in Israel, some of which occurred in global corporations. The thesis highlighted the fact that social relationships, as well as loyalty relationships, occur in particular cultural and social contexts. Future research could usefully further explore the cultural differences in the way people experience loyalty in other social-cultural contexts.

A strong anchor in this research was the consultant-consultees loyalty relations within the consulting practice. This thesis tried to broaden contemporary organisational literature that tends to focus more on contracting aspects of the consultant's work. Future research might examine the context of loyalty from a complementary angle that explores the loyalty of the client to the consultant, for example, exploring how this dynamic impacts on the consultant's freedom to express a different and even critical view of existing modes of thinking and acting.

Loyalty among people and within consultancy relationships is a key relational aspect in human interactions. With this belief, I have elaborated on the theme of loyalty, yet I have come to realise that it has to be viewed from a multifaceted and complex perspective.

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