Identity Formation and Emerging Intentions in Consultant-Client Relationships

Catherine Palmer-Woodward

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Abstract

My original contribution to theory and practice formulates management consultancy as a social act evolving within interaction with clients whereby identity, as an emerging process, can form and be formed within consultant-client relationships. Drawing on Stacey's work on complex responsive process thinking, I have described a reflexive, social self, highlighting the implications for management consultants of this open-ended responsiveness of identity formation.

Within the prevailing management literature there is a sense that consultants design interventions that change organisations, whether through working on leadership development, executive coaching, providing expertise or facilitating organisational change. As part of my original contribution I pick up on the emotional, relational and occasionally messy nature of consulting, which is frequently overlooked in the literature. My research into the emergence of intentions and the formation of identity within consultant-client relationships analyses my work as a researcher-practitioner working within large financial service organisations through a variety of consulting projects. The inquiry examines my professional practice, researched through a social, iterative and temporal method centring on reflexive, narrative inquiries.

I illuminate the fundamental conversational nature of consultant-client relationships; challenging the view of consulting as a transaction whereby the consultant provides a service, withdrawing relatively unchanged. I postulate consulting as a series of conversations with interdependent people wherein emerging themes organise new ways of relating and novelty evolves. Drawing on Elias' process sociology I extrapolate the fundamental interdependence of consultant-client relationships; conceptualising management consulting from a complex responsive processes way of relating.

I challenge the notion of intention as located in the individual; an independent, disembodied, thought before action predicated on an 'if-then' notion of causality, underpinned by an assumption of human beings as autonomous and rational. I develop the work of Joas arguing that intentions are emerging, social and embodied; a theme organising conversations. In particular I detail how strong emotions and embodiment occur in those arresting moments,

where experiences of inclusion and exclusion, can alert the consultant to new ways of relating.

My inquiry has highlighted the significance for management consultants of realising the fundamentally social nature of human interaction and the importance of responsiveness in the living present. With reference to Mead's view of conversation as a pattern of gesture/ response I highlight the consultant-client relationship as co-created and therefore not to be ordered by the consultant who can, nevertheless, pick up on and influence new patterns of relating as they evolve.

Synopsis

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Introduction

Throughout this synopsis I reflect upon my doctoral inquiry, summarising my four projects, whilst further developing the main themes. I discuss research methodology expounding my research method as apposite to complex responsive processes thinking. My research has developed through narratives wherein I closely scrutinise my relationships with clients.[1]

The synopsis is structured to give an overview of research themes as they have evolved, whilst further developing my arguments and contribution. The crucial themes include emerging intentions, inclusion/exclusion, the interdependence of human beings, identity formation and consultant-client relationships. Given the emergent nature of my research a variety of themes evolved, thus I critique relevant literature, from a variety of disciplines, rather than extensively reviewing one.

The synopsis summarises the implications of my inquiry for both fellow researchers and practitioners, elucidating my original contribution.

Context for my evolving inquiry

This is a brief overview of my main research themes, which I will develop after the research methodology section.

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[1] Confidentiality, I discussed with all of the clients mentioned in this thesis that I was engaged in a doctorate. I explained that I might write about them, maintaining confidentiality. They all agreed that they were happy for me to do so. I have changed names and other information, to avoid breaking this confidentiality.

Before starting my doctorate I had been working as a consultant. I had become interested in complex responsive processes thinking and, although it is not a consulting method, I could see implications for my professional practice. Previous to my research I was unclear how I would describe my job; sometimes calling myself a leadership consultant, at others an executive coach, it was not until Project Four that I identified myself as a management consultant.

In Project One I examine experiences and theories that had affected my thinking and professional practice before starting the DMan. I discuss my uncertainty and fear about the implications of complex responsive processes thinking, including a biographical narrative and a description of a leadership project. I start to highlight some evolving research themes. Throughout I am exercised by emergence and consulting, I struggle with how I make promises to clients, in line with an agreed stance, as I start to make sense of conversation as co-created. I conclude with a discussion about my anxiety regarding contracting conversations with clients and the implications of emergence when agreeing objectives and evaluation.

Throughout Project Two I explore intention, drawing on several organisational incidents to provide the research context. The narratives detail my work in a large insurance company, and I adopt narrative inquiry to research emerging intentions. This develops as a major theme, in response to my original business issue regarding making promises to clients. Through exploring a significant client relationship, and in reflexively analysing our work together, I consider intention, as emergent, social and co-created (Joas, 1996), as opposed to the prevailing view of intention as private, individual and a precursor to action (Horvath et al, 1990; Robins, 1984; Dennett, 1989). I analyse how the prevailing philosophical position assumes that human beings are independent, rational and autonomous. Building on the work of Joas (1996) and Elias (1964, 1970, 1991) I distinguish an alternative understanding of people as interdependent, social and reflexive and detail my move from intention as an aim, to intention as a 'theme organising conversation' (Stacey 2003).

I reflect upon a significant organisational incident, within the context of Elias' notion of inclusion and exclusion, highlighting the significance of power relations. In particular I examine the ebb and flow of power as I had experienced it throughout this piece of work, developing my awareness of the importance of patterns of evolving power relations to consultant-client relationships. I examine the enabling-constraining nature of all relationships

(Elias, 1991). I describe how, in the ebb and flow of power, intentions emerge and conversations become more animated. I examine the interdependence of consultant-client relationship, often overlooked in the prevailing management literature, excepting those influenced by complex responsive processes thinking (Christensen, 2005; O'Flynn, 2005).

In Project Three I scrutinise intention, power, embodiment and emotion within my work as a consultant. I examine micro interactions noting how intentions emerge, unpacking my physical sensation, elucidating Burkitt's (1999) 'thinking and communicating body'. I cite Stacey (2003, 2005) and Joas (1996) in considering the impact of evolving intentions on the conventional concept of planning, arguing how this could also be an emergent phenomenon.

I discuss the impact of this inquiry upon my professional practice as a consultant in highly structured organisational environments, reflecting upon a relationship with a senior executive and his team. I criticise an approach to leadership development (Charan et al, 2001), prevalent in their organisation, discussing how this espoused rational approach is ignored in practice and contrasting my experience of working co-creatively with clients. I critique Goleman's work, (1996, 2002, 2003), on emotional intelligence and leadership development. In criticising this prevailing view of emotional intelligence and leadership, I clarify the shift in my thinking and professional practice connecting those 'moments of being', where intentions emerge, with Elias' (1970) work on figuration and emotion.

In Project Four I finally understand myself as a management consultant, which is a huge shift from my earlier debate about my professional identity. I analyse the way in which identity, conceptualised as an emerging process, forms and is formed within consultant-client relationships, discussing relevant theories of identity, (Mead, 1932, Stryker, 1980; Stets & Burke, 2005; Taylor, 1989; McCall, 2003).

I argue that identity formation is frequently overlooked in much of the management consultancy literature and exemplify this through examining three approaches; process, product (or expert) consulting and change management, (Schein, 1999; Nadler & Slywotzky, 2005; Taylor, 2005; Cummings, 2005). I critique the literature, noting that the embodied/emotional aspects of consulting are rarely picked up on in the management literature. Identity formation is hardly discussed, with some exceptions (Jabri, 2004; O'Flynn, 2005; Johnson, 2005). I am not disparaging other approaches per se; I am instead highlighting

an alternative way of conceptualising management consulting. Through this discussion of the literature and analysis of my own practice I make sense of consulting in a way that contributes to the literature and to practitioners.

Throughout the final three projects I challenge a prevailing assumption that human beings are independent, rational and autonomous, positing that we are interdependent, social and reflexive (Joas, 1996; Elias, 1970). In developing these research themes I will consider emerging intentions and identity formation in consultant-client relationships.

Before discussing how these themes are further developed I include a description of my research process, a justification for my research methods, and discuss the connection with the canon of research methods.

Research Methodology

What follows is a brief discussion of management research, which will be followed by a more in-depth discussion of relevant research methodology and a close scrutiny of my research method. The context of my research was my professional practice, appropriate to a professional doctorate, which encourages 'taking experience seriously'. The narratives focus on incidents detailing my experience of consultant-client relationships.

A Brief Overview of Management Research

Although I have chosen a qualitative approach to research, I will briefly discuss the broader research context. I have not included an extensive discussion of a quantitive approach, as this did not support my practice-based research hence I will only briefly compare qualitative and quantitive research.

Quantitative	Qualitative
Numbers	Words
Point of view of researcher	Point of view of participants
Researcher distant	Researcher close
Theory testing	Theory emergent
Static	Process
Structured	Unstructured
Generalisation	Contextual understanding
Hard, reliable data	Rich, deep data
Macro	Micro
Behaviour	Meaning
Artificial settings	Natural Settings

(Bryman & Bell:2003:302)

This is a very brief distinction, aspects of which I would challenge, for example, the researcher providing a, 'point of view of participants' as if separate to and excluding her own, nevertheless the qualitative overview gives a sense of my approach to research. My research evolves as I reflect upon my professional practice through narrative inquiry, which then informs my practice, this reflexive interdependency underpins my research method. My inquiry has involved a close relationship with others involved in the research (my clients, research colleagues and supervisors), evolving from my everyday practice in natural settings, my contribution to theory has emerged from this inquiry; thus a qualitative approach was clearly indicated. Although quantitive research dominates the management literature, qualitative research is increasingly significant, Johnson & Duberley (2000).

Collis & Hussey (1997) describe qualitative research as useful to management researchers in certain contexts, arguing that 'qualitative research is more subjective in nature and involves examining and reflecting on perceptions in order to gain an understanding of social and human activities', (p.13).

Bryman & Bell (2003) refer to Gubrium & Holstein's (1997) four traditions of qualitative research.

- Naturalism – seeks to understand social reality in its own terms; 'as it really is'; providing rich descriptions of people and interaction in natural settings.

- Ethnomethodology – seeks to understand how social order is created through talk and interaction; has a naturalistic orientation.

- Emotionalism – exhibits a concern with subjectivity and gaining access to 'inside' experience; concerned with the inner reality of humans.

- Postmodernism – has an emphasis on ' method talk'; sensitive to the different ways that social reality can be constructed.

(Bryman & Bell:2003:281)

This simplifies a vast canon of qualitative research excluding some, whilst collapsing others. Nevertheless it provides a 'rough sketch' of the principal qualitative approaches. My research method, while drawing on some of the methods described, embraces some fundamental differences.

One of the distinguishing assumption about qualitative research, is that researchers prefer to consider theory as something that emerges from practice, (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000; Bryman & Bell, 2003), as opposed to quantitive research where the research is carried out in order to prove a particular theory. This is not the place for an in-depth discussion but I would suggest that this is a little over-simplified; undoubtedly there is a theoretical context for my research, aligned with my interest in complex responsive processes thinking. Nevertheless my research is not about proving this theory, but developing new theory in a practical, organisational context, hence mitigating one of the main challenge to organisational research regarding the distance between the concerns of successful researchers and the worries of most practitioners, (MacLean et al, 2002; Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006).

Van de Ven & Johnson (2006) discuss the 'gap between theory and practice' (p. 802),

Several special issues in leading academic journals have highlighted growing concerns that academic research has become less useful for solving practical problems and that

theory and practice in the professions is widening... there is also increasing criticism that findings from ... consulting studies are not useful ... and do not get implemented

(Van de Ven & Johnson:2006:802)

They recommend 'engaged scholarship', in which the practitioners and researchers work together to 'co-produce knowledge that can advance theory and practice in a given domain', (ibid p 803). They suggest that academics and practitioners build on their different perspectives and understanding in order to research particularly complex problems. They base their argument on the concept of arbitrage, which they describe as a 'dialectical form of inquiry', (ibid p. 803) and stress how this kind of scholarship can 'advance basic research', (ibid). McKelvey (2006) criticises their suggestion of engaged scholarship, suggesting that there is a danger that,

Given the obvious interdependencies, the behaviour of the collective could spiral into very constructive or very dysfunctional outcomes... but outside (disconnected) scientists wouldn't necessarily know which to accept as truth claims... has any significant, novel, science type "truth" actually emerged from decades of action research.

(McKelvey:2006:825)

He continues with this theme claiming that such approaches 'dumb down' research.

Van de Ven & Johnson (2006a) challenge McKelvey's view of their work saying that engaged scholarship is a 'mode of inquiry that translates into management research the evolutionary critical realist perspective of modern science', (p.817). Van de Ven & Johnson (2006a) continue arguing that 'An equally important purpose of engaged scholarship is to create scientifically meaningful research' (p 830). Although this debate is interesting both sides create a dichotomy between researchers and practitioners, which seems unbridgeable, thus ignoring the possibility of research as co-creation with colleagues, or researcher as practitioner.

However others have written about researchers and practitioners, working collaboratively on research questions. MacLean et al have further developed Mode 2 research (Gibbons et al, 1994) as a response to some of these concerns. They encapsulate the key features,

The five features of mode 2 knowledge management production

Knowledge produced in the context of application

Transdisciplinarity

Heterogeneity and organisational diversity

Social accountability and reflexivity

Diverse range of quality controls

<div align="right">(MacLean et al:2002:191)</div>

Briefly this means that there is a requirement that the work is conducted within the context of a particular problem that is ongoingly negotiated within the 'organisational context'. As the work progresses there is an interweaving of 'practical solutions and theory building', which are circulated by the participants. The research teams are drawn from across teams and extend beyond particular organisations. The 'greater levels of communication and transparency', in addition to the evolving and varied participants, encourages greater reflexivity. Finally the wider range of participants means that quality controls need to reflect a much broader community than in 'mode one', (ibid). The authors discuss some work in which they had utilised this approach, including all five features of mode 2 research and involving both practitioners and researchers. They compare their approach, which they call 5mode2, with other qualitative approaches to organisational research; concluding that this approach is akin to cooperative inquiry (Heron & Reason, 1997). I detail this approach as an example of how organisational research is developing. Whilst it is obviously a thorough and grounded approach, which was useful and relevant for both practitioners and researchers, it is underpinned by a rational view of human behaviour, which I will challenge in later sections. It also differs from my research in the clear distinction between the researchers and the practitioners and in acknowledging the different roles and specialisms.

A Shifting Research Methodology

As I discuss in Project One, my early research had been quantitative. As an academic I was introduced to qualitative research, becoming involved in running a Masters in Action Research. I became interested in the nature of research, and started gaining some clarity about

the different approaches. At the time I was drawn to Reason's work. In my struggle to develop my present methodological stance, I returned to his work,

> A first characteristic of action research, then, is that is concerned with addressing *worthwhile practical purposes*,... So action research draws on an extended epistemology that integrates theory and practice... It is concerned with how we make sense of experience and accounts, and how we link these with a wider field of scholarship; it is concerned with the congruence of our theories and our practice ... and our claims to knowledge against evidence derived from our practice (Whitehead, 2000). Thus a second characteristic of action research is that it encompasses *many ways of knowing*... action research is a participative and democratic process that seeks to do research *with, for,* and *by* people... Since action research is so intimately bound up in people's lives and work, a fourth characteristic is that it is necessarily an *emergent process..*

> (Reason:2005:4-5)

Whilst retaining some sympathy with action research I disagree some of these assumptions. Reason (2005) talks about integrating theory and practice; this seems to imply a split, which is, in some way, overcome. I don't feel able to distinguish between my theory and my practice; when I am working with people I am not aware of 'excluding theory'. It is clear that Reason's work is underpinned by an assumption that the researcher is independent, autonomous and in control of the research process, which I challenge.

Reason (2005) also makes strong value statements as part of his methodological definition; though respecting his values, they do not necessarily provide a framework for my research. Can I be sure that my research into intention or identity will have a 'worthwhile practical purpose'? Given that he later talks about an emergent process, how can I know in advance whether it will be worthwhile? I was also struck by his notion of research being a participative and democratic process. This seems to evoke a sense of the researcher as an external agent 'drawing in participants'. That has not been my experience since; my sense is of the research process emerging in co-creation with a variety of people. Nor can I ignore the power dynamics that make the notion of my research being, '*with, for* and *by* people', nonsensical. As a doctoral student I am aware that I am influenced by 'the author's need to successfully

withstand the ordeal of an academic rite of passage, i.e. the achievement of completing a doctorate' Jeffcutt's (1994) p. 252.

My Research Process

My approach to research is iterative, social and reflexive. My inquiry has developed, through a series of projects that have been regularly iterated and shared. The four projects are based on narratives relating to organisational incidents drawn from my practice and critiqued within the context of relevant literature. I started each project by writing about arresting moments from my practice. In reflecting upon those narratives, I would find new relevant literature. My work would be shared with my learning set and supervisors who would challenge and comment; this would lead to a rewriting of the project with new reflections and themes emerging. This continued in a social, iterative, reflexive process that was only stopped by project deadlines. In Project Four I also began, more explicitly, to share my work with my clients, asking for their input into this process. They gave both written and verbal comments, impacting my reflections on the evolving themes. Finally, during my progression viva, I experienced an arresting moment when my external examiner challenged me regarding my literature. He pointed out that there should have been more reference to either coaching or management consulting. This was seminal to my inquiry leading me to question my professional practice and my identity. This led to new themes emerging, which I explore in Project Four, and continue to develop in this synopsis. Indeed I now describe myself as a management, rather than leadership, consultant.

 This social, iterative and reflexive research process evolves from the theoretical underpinning of my inquiry, resonates with complex responsive processes thinking.

Research as Social, Iterative and Temporal.

My projects evolved through the patterning of both verbal and written conversations. Through iterations of the narratives, themes emerge; affecting what was included and excluded. New themes continued to emerge, as I wrote and rewrote each project, conversed with clients and read the literature. Within this temporal, social and iterative research context, interpretations

evolve and patterns emerge. Writing, discussing and rewriting the narratives are a fundamental aspect of my research method.

This constant re-engaging with the literature and the narratives facilitates a reflective and reflexive approach to my research. Although all doctoral research is, ipso facto, social, all researchers are interested in what they are doing, and talk to others about their work, this is not a fundamental underpinning to their research method. My research method is explicitly and rigorously social, there are agreed times and colleagues (learning set and supervisors) with whom I share my work and respond to theirs. In having explicit deadlines for each project, the research findings are temporally impacted; given different timelines, other themes may have evolved.

This iterative social research process makes sense within complex responsive processes thinking. It is the 'I' sitting here typing this thesis reflecting on the 'me', which patterns and is patterned by conversations with colleagues, friends and texts; a figuration from which themes emerge.

> Complexity theory is relatively new; the research path is less well defined, so it may be perceived as high risk and overly subjective, with knowledge produced that is not necessarily generalisable.
>
> (Houchin & MacLean:2005:154)

I triangulated some of my data in conversation with clients. Whilst this differs from a traditional approach, i.e. adopting differing research methods, I am triangulating through agents, by involving clients in the research process. William's (2005), in describing the doctoral research process, refers to Davidson (2001) who postulates triangulation as a 'threefold interaction between two agents, in interaction between each other and the world' (p121). Williams (2005) links this with Mead's view of communication as gesture-response, thereby elucidating the relationship between complex responsive processes thinking and the prevailing doctoral research methodology.

Research as a reflexive process

As an action researcher I had seen reflection simply as a way of evaluating my practice, engaging with this inquiry has led to a more rigorous and research-led approach. I have been challenged on my implicit premises, thereby transforming my inquiry. I am more rigorously reflective about my professional practice. I consider the themes that I am exploring around intention, identity and power, when reflecting upon organisational incidents, sometimes even within the moment. In Project Four I describe a day with clients, which was fascinating, including passionate discourse and some conflict. Initially I wrote about the day in my journal, but did not connect it with my research. Over the next few weeks, I continued to reflect upon it, discussing it with clients and colleagues. I gradually realised that new themes were patterning this conversation, our intentions had been an organising theme, this had continued to pattern the project, leading to many conversations. They had focussed on evaluation and even now, the participants continue to working together on 'qualitative evaluation in a bank'.

My research is both reflective and reflexive. Weber (2003) distinguishes between the two,

> … we try to understand the assumptions, biases, and perspectives that underlie one component of our research (e.g. the way we have constructed our theory) we are being *reflective*.

> (Weber:2003:vi)

This describes my struggle as I make sense of my professional practice within a context of complex responsive processes thinking. It has also been reflexive.

> Insofar as we try to understand the assumptions, biases, and perspectives that underlie all components of our research and, in particular, the interrelationships, among them, we are being reflexive. As reflexive researchers we first try to reach a deep understanding of the individual components of our research – our theories, our research methods… We then try to understand our research as a whole – how the different components fit together…and so the hermeneutic circle goes on until we

conclude we are no longer able to deepen our understanding of, or obtain further insights in, the research we are undertaking.

(Weber:2003:vi)

In my situation the moment in which this process formally stops, relates to my doctoral completion dates. Inevitably it will continue informally. Despite Weber's somewhat atomistic description of the 'picking apart' of his research, it gives a flavour of the constant re-engagement as new themes evolve. It is difficult to use a sequential medium, such as writing, to describe the reflexive approach to research.

Hardy and Clegg (1997) suggest that there are 'Various forms of reflexivity: ways of doing research, which reflect back on themselves, especially in terms of the relation of the researcher to the research process', (p. 10). This emphasises the need to be aware of ourselves, as we write about these experiences, exploring and examining all of the assumptions that underpin our statements, whilst maintaining an awareness of our political, ethical and theoretical context. The researcher is not outside the research process; rather she is an integral part thereof. It is tempting to see myself as an observer 'in control of the conversations' described in the narratives, rather than a participant describing emerging patterns co-created by the participants.

Cunliffe's (2003) echoes aspects of my research experience.

Reflexivity is entwined with a crisis of representation that questions our relationship with our social world and the ways in which we account for our experience. This questioning takes the form of a 'turning back' on knowledge, truth claims, language, and texts to make them more transparent and less believable …

(Cunliffe:2003:985)

Cunliffe (2003) is distinguishing reflexivity from more traditional forms of research, which could be conceptualised as seeking for the truth, as are Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000). They challenge the notion of some kind of truth or reality, outside ourselves, that we should discover and understand; wherein the researcher can stand outside events as an observer, separate to her own experience. Cunliffe (2003) talks about 'reflexivity unsettling representation', suggesting that we are constantly constructing meaning and social realities as

we interact with others' (ibid, p. 985). As I reread my journal and wrote my projects, I developed new ways of understanding previous experiences, which is now part of my professional practice. When I am working I notice thoughts and ideas emerging, a journal or narrative offers the opportunity to more rigorously examine the ebb and flow of ideas, in other words, my research is underpinned by hermeneutic reflection.

My research and professional practice are evolving, the distinction blurring. In Project Four I describe how I become aware of myself as project leader, in the moment where I realised I was not the leader; actually I was participating in the group, often a 'respected outsider', sometimes feeling included and then excluded, experiencing bodily the ebb and flow of power, (Elias, 1970).

Cunliffe (2003) highlights the need for us to consider our research in terms of both what we do and what we don't do; this will include what we write about and what we exclude from our writings.

> Radically reflexive researchers explore how we as researchers and practitioners constitute meaning through our own taken-for-granted suppositions, actions, and linguistic practices.
>
> (Cunliffe:2003:989)

In reflecting on my work I attend to, and engage with my practice, questioning my own assumptions and professional context. There is also my interaction with others in this research process wherein I reflect on the conversations about my research. With each iteration I make new sense of my inquiry and in so doing continue to clarify my contribution. Given that complex responsive processes thinking is a newly developing theory there is limited relevant literature, particularly in relation to research, therefore the social aspect of the reflexive approach is fundamental to ensure rigorous inquiry.

Although reflexivity is intrinsically social, my research method encourages a more thorough and profound social engagement. As I reflect on narratives I develop a sense of my practice as research, thus extending my sense of how theory and practice conjoin. My original view of theory was of something separate, and 'outside' professional practice. Even when working with

Jack Whitehead, who encouraged me to 'develop living theory' (Whitehead, 1989), I saw theory as a set of ideas, unrelated and outside my practice.

In the patterning of my reflections about reading, working, narratives and research, I experience moments, **in my practice,** which I write about in my projects, through which new theory is emerging, which is in turn affecting my practice. Thus my previous distinction seems moot; by researching our practice we develop new theory and whilst engaging in our practice we are evolving theory, paradoxically both separately and in the same moment. When I considered my own work as an academic teacher, (when working with Jack), I was interested in developing my practice, but could see little relevance in the theory with which I engaged; in adopting a social reflexive approach to research, the theory/practice distinction has become meaningless. Through my engagement with 'theory/practice' patterns are evolving and themes emerging. I will continue, as a researcher, although this is an end to the doctoral recording of this process producing my thesis.

Narrative and Research

Narrative inquiry has formed the context through which my inquiry emerges. My research themes develop through meticulous examination of organisational incidents, which have evolved through repeated iteration and intense engagement with my work and learning set colleagues. While writing and rewriting the narratives, close engagement with relevant literature illuminates new themes, which, in turn, affect the narratives.

Boje (2001) describes narratives as,

> the theory that organisation and other theorists use with stories, to see how narratives and prenarratives (*stories, my addition)* are acts of 'commodification, exchange and consumption' (Clair et al, 1996, p. 255)… To translate narratives into story is to impose counterfeit coherence and order on otherwise fragmented and multi-layered experiences of desire.

> (Boje:2001:2)

Boje describes how in writing narrative, one is bringing a (possibly unreal) completion to the ongoing antenarratives that occur in organisations. In writing I am choosing a moment to crystallise and complete a narrative, unlike in conversations. I stop producing my doctoral work by a certain time hence it is temporally dependent.

Polkinghorne (1988) describes narrative as a research method that either, attempts to make sense of narratives held by others, or provides an opportunity to explore a question of one's own. Given that my narratives describe my work with others, I am not explicitly making sense of their narratives; I am exploring, more deeply, my research questions. This distinction between self and others' narrative is moot given the social nature of human interaction, hence I am making sense of our story. However in Project Four I more explicitly involve others' in the research process, engaging more overtly with their narratives and giving them the opportunity to engage with mine.

Czarniawska (1998) argues that in using the narrative 'as a device' there are no rules with regard to how they should be constructed. She suggests that narrative occurs everywhere in our life and therefore offers a 'natural' approach to anyone wishing to explore their practice. My interpretation of what I, and others, mean by intention and identity within consultant-client relationships has evolved in ways that would have been inconceivable when I first started writing the narratives.

> To narrate has its roots in the word 'gnarus' – to know. In narrating we create meaning by bringing things into relation, by making connection, by drawing attention in one way or another so as to create a pathway in time, a train of events.
>
> (Shaw: 2002:26-27)

Thus by iteratively writing accounts detailing micro moments in consultant-client relationships, I engage with relevant literature and conduct my research. My starting point for narratives has always been arresting moments, where something has struck me as different or unusual; accompanied by strong emotions sometimes joy, often discomfort or shame. As the narratives are written and shared with others, ideas evolve drawing me to literature, which impacts my exploration of emerging themes. Thus narrative inquiry is a significant aspect of my research.

Chase (2005) argues that narrative inquiry is a term overused by many qualitative researchers when referring 'to any prosaic data' She describes contemporary narrative inquiry as

> …. a particular type –subtype- of qualitative inquiry. Contemporary narrative inquiry can be characterised as an amalgam of interdisciplinary analytic lenses, diverse disciplinary approaches, and revolving around an interest in biographical particulars as narrated by the one who lives them

(Chase:2005:651)

My narratives are the type that she describes as, 'a short topical story about a particular event and specific characters' (ibid, p. 652). I am the one whose 'biographical particulars' are the focus, with significant others' narratives, appearing at different times. In my writing, I have included their words as part of my story.

Chase (2005) warns of the 'danger' of narrative researchers speaking with an 'authoritative voice' about others' stories. Even in including others' words I choose what to put in and what to exclude, I develop themes based on these conversations. This is a limitation; whilst the conversations were co-created, the inquiry is my own. Chase (2005) refers to Czarniawska (2002) who suggests that 'the justice or injustice of this' will vary according to the 'attitude of the researcher and the precautions he or she takes' (ibid p 664), I can only offer my version of the events in the narrative, as a researcher, caution needs to be applied when hypothesising about others' inner narratives. Johnson (2001) even challenges first person authority, when we are discussing our own thinking.

Using narrative to explore questions reflexively is an appropriate methodology, given the theoretical underpinning of complex response processes thinking. The method encourages a focus on detailing moments in the living present and reflects the emergent nature of my research.

Generalisation and contribution

So given my research methods, in what way does my work contribute to knowledge and practice, in other words how is it 'generalisable'? Williams (2005), argues that such a question, 'states unconscious assumptions about knowledge as a stock of something that by virtue of contribution goes up', (p. 47). He draws on the work of Rorty (1998) who posits that in research we should abandon the 'pursuit of truth' and consider what works and what is justified.

> These Rortian attitudes seem to be directly germane to the research activities that I associate with the idea of complex responsive processes and to the product of research outcomes informed by such a way of thinking. These are most often detailed and extended reflective narratives of experience that integrate… the intensely localised character of individually recalled live experiences explicitly with a critical theoretical perspective.
>
> (Williams:2005:51)

Williams describes Davidson (2001), who argues that we are able to move away from purely subjective ideas towards legitimated ideas through the exchange of our beliefs, and validated 'in the ongoing conduct of relationships' (ibid). Throughout this inquiry I have written many narratives examining my practice reflexively, within a community of researchers and clients.

Chase demonstrates how in the relationship between 'the particular and the general' it is possible to extrapolate narrative based findings to other contexts,

> … many contemporary narrative researchers approach any narrative as an *instance* of the possible relationships between a narrator's active construction of self, on the one hand, and the social, cultural and historical circumstances that enable and constrain that narrative, on the other. Researchers often highlight a range of possible narratives to show that no one particular story is determined by a certain social location, but they do not claim that their studies exhaust the possibilities within that context….
>
> (Chase:2005:667)

Throughout this thesis I have included a 'range of possible narratives', I do not claim that they are exhaustive.

Instead of turning to positivist terminology to evaluate our research we could ask other sorts of questions such as 'is the work relevant, sustainable and timely, as well as worthy of peer-based review and publication?', (personal communication, MacLean, 2006). This is a practice-based doctorate, where we are asked to take our experience seriously hence my professional practice is the natural focus, and my inquiry needs to be relevant to fellow management consultants as well as the academy.

> Experiential descriptions and assertions are relatively easily assimilated by readers into memory and use. When the researcher's narrative provides opportunities for *vicarious experiences* readers extend their perceptions of happenings… at least to some extent, parallel actual experience, feeding into the most fundamental process of awareness and understanding. ...Trumbell and I called these processes *naturalistic generalisations…*
>
> (Stake:2005:454)

Thus in resonating with others, my research offers 'naturalistic' generalisability. A community of practitioner researchers introduced me to qualitative research; reading their work affected how I developed my practice. This was not my experience of reading or pursuing most positivist research. Qualitative research stimulated my awareness and facilitated my understanding; the stories of other practitioners resonated with my experiences and inspired me to research my own practice. In reading quantitive research I felt like an outsider looking on, I was interested in the insiders' perspective, it seemed more relevant to my practice, inspiring me to research my own work. I was encouraged to engage and practice qualitative research. Thus by inspiring others' to continue the research it could be argued that the research continues, and is therefore sustainable.

The value of the iterative process, both in terms of writing, and the conversations held with clients, my learning set and supervisors, has contributed to an extensive and rigorous exploration of emerging intentions and identity formation in consultant-client relationships. As Stacey (2005), points out this research has been conducted within complex responsive

processes of thinking, through which, 'he purpose of this iterative approach is to make sense of experience and as the researcher goes through this process, he or she experiences movements in his or her thoughts', (p.24).

As with any researcher, my assumptions have influenced my choice. I have been affected by complex responsive processes thinking, which implies a social and iterative approach to research. I believe that a narrative approach is most appropriate when studying my own practice. Finally my personal experience has led me to find qualitative research more useful, sustainable and have more resonance (hence more relevance) than quantitive research. Christiansen's (2005) argues that consulting is emerging participative exploration. I agree, my inquiry has led me to view my work as a consultant, as research; thus developing practice into praxis.

In the next section I will develop the themes that continue to emerge throughout this inquiry, indicating what this implies both for the academy and practitioners, thereby making clear my original contribution.

Management Consultancy; emerging intentions and identity formation

What follows is a discussion of my major research themes, and I will consider how this has impacted my view of management consulting. Initially I asked, 'how can I practice, as a management consultant, **in line with an agreed stance?'** When talking to potential clients I believed that they wanted promises that I conceived of as, 'predictive intentions' (Anscombe, 1957). Throughout this inquiry I have found that, in conversation with clients, our agreements are more flexible than I first thought. This led to an in-depth analysis of intentions and to developing Joas' (1996) view of intentions as emergent, corporeal and social within an organisational context. As described earlier in the synopsis a new theme evolved, which started the process whereby I re-conceptualised my work as something that may involve identity formation, both for clients and myself. Whilst this seemed new it resonated with my ongoing concern with how I named my work, executive coach, leadership consultant, or management consultant. My research into identity formation, evolving from Mead, (1934), Elias (1991) and Stacey (2003), has resulted in a new way of understanding consultant-client relationships.

Whilst some of these themes, resonate with the prevailing literature; nevertheless the co-created nature of consultant-client relationships has implications, which are rarely mentioned. I am arguing that within consultant-client relationships intentions emerge ongoingly and pattern conversation, identity formation may occur, with both clients and consultants. My original contribution is to show how intentions emerge and identities form within consultant-client relationships.

The following gives an overview of how essential themes have evolved throughout my inquiry. Some of my prior assumptions, were implicit and unconsidered, whereas others were a function of my reading, research and study. These were my opinions, not theoretical assumptions, e.g. I have described, not substantiated, my view of research, prior to the doctorate.

Table One

Themes	Prior to my inquiry	As a result of my research
Research	Adopted action research intending to research my practice, in order to improve it and develop 'living educational theory' (Whitehead, 1989)	Research as a social, iterative process; a reflexive engagement with narrative inquiries. (Stacey, 2005; Cunliffe, 2003; Boje, 2001; MacLean et al, 2002)
Human Beings	Accepting a mind/body split. People as rational, independent and autonomous	Social, interdependent, *homines aperti* (Elias, 1970); thinking bodies. (Burkitt, 1999; Joas, 1996)
Intention	A plan pre-conceptualised by an individual; who would then implement, or help others implement his/her plan.	An emergent theme, organising conversations with interdependent human beings, emerging corporeally and socially, (Stacey, 2006; Joas, 1996)
Management Consultancy	Would argue that it was a process, whereby consultants worked with client's to distinguish their needs and facilitate organisational change, (Schein, 1999). However my professional practice, included an amalgam of ways of working.	A consultant-client relationship in which conversations are co-created and intentions evolve; patterned by power relations and within which identities form and are formed.
Consultant/client relationship	The consultant facilitates the client in determining the problem (or distinguishing the issues/strengths) and helping them develop, (Schein,1999). The clients should change, (behaviour or attitudes), the consultant would not.	An interdependent relationship that is both enabling and constraining, wherein power relations evolve in a patterning of inclusion and exclusion. Within conversations both consultant and client's identities may be forming and being formed

Emerging intentions in consultant-client relationships

Throughout the early part of my inquiry I struggled with the view of intentions as an emergent phenomenon, this seemed at odds with the way in which much management work was enacted. Through Projects Two and Three I develop an alternative view of intention, which continues to develop my professional practice. Joas (1996) describes intention as emergent, social and corporeal, I have explored all three aspects of intention, developing my contribution to professional practice by examining intention within organisational incidents. In making sense of my narratives I developed a new way of conceptualising my experience of consulting.

In Project One I describe how I feel challenged by the notion of emergence given that I had previously agreed outcomes with clients. In Project Two I examine my relationship with one of my clients and it is clear that, whilst we had discussed our purpose, it was in very general terms and we had no agreed outcomes. The project developed over a period of a year as I worked with my client and her colleagues. New themes emerge, as our relationship develops some in line with our espoused purpose, others not. In writing about some of the arresting moments in our relationship I show how intentions emerge within conversations, particularly in moments of evolving power relations.

Searle (1983) argues that intentionality is present when 'mental states are directed towards objects or events'; thus suggesting that intentionality does not require pre-determination but can happen in the moment, he names this 'intention-in-action'. This seems a move towards intention as emergent, within action and purposeful. By emergent I mean 'a pattern arises in the complete absence of any plan, blueprint or programme for that pattern,' Stacey (2005, p. 13). Nevertheless Searle still portrays intentions as independent and autonomously decided upon, as opposed to interdependent. I have detailed how emerging intentions are an organising theme evolving through conversations with clients, not as an aim originating with an individual actor, but as a thematic patterning of interaction. Thus intentions are not some thing owned by an individual but a theme organised by and organising relationships, (Stacey, 2003).

Joas (1996) describes how intentions, and creativity, emerge as a result of a moment of interruption to habitual behaviour and pre-reflective aspirations, that is aspirations that have been present for sometime and of which we are unaware. Dewey (1917) also highlights the importance of interruptions to 'pre-reflective aspirations' in his discussion of how novelty occurs.

> The obstacles, which confront us are stimuli to variation, to novel response, and hence are occasions of progress. If a favour done us by the environment conceals a threat, so its disfavour is a potential means of hitherto unexperienced model of success.
>
> (Dewey:1917:43)

I detail the emergence of intentions by investigating organisational incidents, analysing examples of conversation with clients, indicating where new intentions emerge, in association with strong emotions; highlighting the shifting patterns of power relations.

> The whole is not designed or chosen in advance because it emerges in local interaction. Such emergence is in no way a matter of chance because what emerges is precisely because of what all the agents are doing *or not doing* (my italics).
>
> (Stacey:2006:402)

I discuss how my initial view of intention as a private, independent mental act, preceding action, is based on an implicit assumption that human beings are independent, rational and autonomous, through my recognition of our fundamental interdependence I reconceptualise my understanding of how I work with clients, recognising the co-created nature of our conversations.

MacLean and MacIntosh (2005) locate their discussion of the emergence of intention within the dynamic of creative action. They highlight the difference between intention as 'thought before action', predicated on the notion of human beings as rational and autonomous, with intention as a dynamic concept, arising out of action. Their argument is underpinned by the concept of human beings as interdependent, 'interactive' beings. I develop this thinking through my inquiry, examining these ideas with reference to my relationships with clients. Through narratives, I analyse how conversations evolve and intentions emerge, asking is the

conversation, paradoxically, both happening to me and being influenced by me, hence expounding the co-creation of conversation?

I respond to my original business challenge regarding emergence in consultancy and the implications of planning my work by exploring Joas' view,

> breaking with the teleological interpretation of the intentionality of action influences the image we have of the very act of setting and creating goals. According to the teleological view…this act appears to be so free that it could be called arbitrary. The actor designs his goals independently … of any influence from the outside world. If we adopt the understanding of intentionality that I am putting forward here, however, goal setting becomes the result of a situation in which the actor finds himself prevented from continuing his pre-reflective aspirations.

(Joas:1996:162)

In making sense of management consultancy as an emergent process, I demonstrate how planning emerges within co-created conversations with clients. This is particularly significant given my earlier concern, and business issue, regarding making promises to clients.

Throughout the management and philosophical literature intention is assumed to be a private, individual act; related to an aim or a plan. This is particularly the case when examining some of the prevailing management consultancy literature, (de Haan, 2005; Abell & Simons, 2000; Cooperrider & Whitney 2007). Indeed de Haan (2005) predicates his definition of consultancy on intention,

> I see consulting as a *state of mind*, and *intention* in speech which, provided it is properly translated into interventions, can be very helpful for others.

(De Haan:2005:xiii)

De Haan (2005) argues that intention is a state of mind, carried within the consultant's mind and enacted through speech, whereby she can intervene and help others. He uses intention to distinguish between different concepts, acknowledgement and flattery, irony and sarcasm.

Whilst de Haan adopts a collaborative approach, he considers that it is the consultant who holds the intention.

In much of the literature management consultants are described as working with clients, with collaboration of varying degrees, to plan and implement an approach, which will improve the organisation. (There are exceptions to this, which I will discuss later.) Many of the descriptions focus on seemingly independent intentions owned by individuals. I expound the emergence of intentions as 'themes organising conversations', (Stacey 2003). I distinguish between collaboration and co-creation. I show how intentions arise within conversations and therefore is not individually owned but evolves within the gesture-response of consultant-client relationships. I explicate how intentions emerged from particular interactions, coloured by strong emotions and occurring as unplanned and messy. I describe how some of these conversations move in novel directions, whilst others seem stuck and repetitive.

In distinguishing this approach I have became aware of the idealised and 'disembodied' descriptions in much of the management literature, and to some extent in my prior understanding. My professional practice, preceding this inquiry, was predicated on myself, as the consultant, being responsible for the success of a project. Whilst this is rather a stark description, I felt like the leader of the group, needing to have the answers, even at times to provide the questions. Through my research I have become aware of patterns emerging in the moment and thereby grown to be more responsive in conversation with clients.

Joas (1996) focuses on the social aspect of intention and action, my inquiry details intentions emerging, within conversations with clients, who are also bringing aspirations and intentions to the conversation.

> All anyone can do, however powerful, is engage intentionally, and as skilfully as possible, in local interaction, dealing with the consequences as they emerge.
>
> (Stacey:2006:405)

The consultant and client have an emergent, responsive relationship, wherein themes evolve, co-created through conversation between interdependent human beings, within the social act, wherein the gesture of one finds meaning in the response of the other. So what does this mean for management consultants?

In much of the management literature, despite descriptions of a consultant's work, there seems to be a lack of presence of this human being that is working with clients. Sometimes one glimpses a human being hurt or moved by an experience (Abell & Simons 2000; Quinn & Quinn, 2005), but often their presence is deficient. Throughout my inquiry I depict moments where intentions emerge or identities evolve, alerted by strong physical sensation and emotion. I am not suggesting that other management consultants do not experience these feelings, rather that it is rarely picked up in the prevailing literature.

Corporeal awareness and emerging intentions

In reading management literature there is a generally disembodied sense of the clients and consultants. Emerging intentions are experienced corporeally, and by ignoring the physical mediacy of the client-consulting relationship, consultants' awareness of new themes emerging may be limited. Whilst this Cartesian duality is still inherent in the prevailing view of intention and consultancy, recently there have been challenges to mind-body split (Joas, 1996; Damasio, 2002; Burkitt, 1999).

> According to this alternative view, goal setting does not take place by an act of the intellect prior to the actual action, ….we thematise aspirations that are normally at work without our being aware of them. But where are these aspirations located? They are located in our bodies.

(Joas:1996:158)

MacLean & MacIntosh (2005) detail the experience of intention emerging corporeally in their description of the fight between Foreman and Ali. This resonates with my experience of training my horse where I can mount with a clear intention to practice an advanced movement, which quickly evolves into something different. For example on one occasion my horse bolted and fell over, throwing me, this resulted in a much simpler desire to stop him, a break in my pre-reflected aspirations. In order to do this I had to ride differently, in fact I improved my riding, thus as intentions emerge, hence novelty occurs. Johnson, (2005) suggests that in his practice as a consultant it is when he experiences certain bodily

sensations, which he describes as moments of dissonance, when the opportunity to do something different arises.

I describe many incidents of this. Whilst conversing with clients I notice a knot in my stomach, a lump in my throat, which I describe as fear, resulting in an 'imperative to speak'; making suggestions to clients that are embarrassing but lead to new conversations. I also examine moments where I feel 'frozen and unable to speak', contrasting the two and illuminating the role of power. Whilst I am describing my experiences, I recognise that they emerge within the social act.

> Thus the body could be said to be a thinking body and to have intentionality prior to the emergence of language and self-consciousness. The body reaching out to grasp an object is one of the basic forms of intentional action, and no cognitive representation is needed for such performances. Thinking and intentional activity are therefore pre-linguistic and pre-cognitive, and prior to the self-conscious subject there exists the bodily subject which is its foundation. No cognitive form of apprehension of the world could exist without the bodily subject and its performances.
>
> (Burkitt:1999:75)

This corporeal resonance is a function of the interdependence of human beings. Previously I had overlooked my bodily responses when reflecting on my practice or whilst in conversation. They were present, but whilst I was very aware of others' bodies, I would ignore, rather than examine my own. Embodiment is an unseen aspect of consulting Of course, consultants experience and may act upon their physical responses, however it is not examined in most of the literature. Through my increasing awareness of my bodily responsiveness my practice is evolving. I am willing to comment on my sensations and emotions and discuss my experience with clients. I also encourage clients to develop their own awareness of 'what their body is doing'. As I describe in Project Two, Sally's horror as she watched herself on video, she expostulates about the stillness of her face and how bored she looked, thereafter she committed herself to be more noticing of her own physical responses with some success.

In scrutinising my practice, I am increasingly aware of the way in which a heightened awareness of my own body is affecting my work and conversations with clients. Recently a client (Jo) was describing an argument with her boss. Suddenly she started to talk quickly,

going red-faced and speaking jerkily. I noticed myself not listening to what she said, instead I become aware of my body tensing, I started to lean back in my chair until it was resting against the wall as a response to her gesture. My body was moving away from hers pre-cognitively. I felt my back against the wall and said, 'I feel scared, you are like Boudicca when angry'. Whilst this was said humorously I was pointing to something significant. She started to cry and we talked about how she did not like to think that she was frightening. I asked Jo how she felt in those moments where she seemed so angry. She described feeling cold and a total focus. We discussed how she could develop her awareness of this, allowing her to become more conscious of her possible impact on others. We had dinner together recently and she told me that in her new job she was increasingly aware of her 'Boudicca moments'. By taking my experience seriously the issue of corporeal sensations and conversational responses, has become a more explicitly discussed aspect of my, and others', behaviour.

Johnson (2005) discusses how, in a consulting conversation, a colleague points to his 'pumping fist', of which he had been unaware, this led to a new and unexpected discussion about what was happening in the conversation.

> It is simply that, as the rationalised post-Cartesian body emerged through the Renaissance, we moved further and further away from our sensate body and relied upon language and rationality to explain the world. I suggest that this has impeded our understanding of human relations and communication and, of course, change in organisations.

(Johnson:2005:166)

Johnson describes how he has been developing his ability to recognise and respond to his own and others' corporeality in his consulting work. I have developed this thinking, hence extending his work as a previous student of the doctoral programme, detailing my, and my clients' awareness of the importance of our bodily awareness in developing free-flowing, novel, conversations.

I examine the role of embodiment and emotion extensively throughout Project Three. Drawing upon a variety of organisational incidents at a large retail bank, Xeno, I compare my experiences with Goleman (1994, 2002, 2003) whose work on emotions and leadership, is

often referred to by clients in the bank. Goleman argues that leaders require a set of 'emotional competences', which he splits into understanding and managing, self and relationships. He discusses how these different competences can be developed, assuming a high level of rational control over changing ones' self. His work is clearly underpinned by a notion of the individual as separate and independent. He describes how emotionally intelligent leaders impact on the culture of their organisations, fundamentally ignoring the interdependence of leaders with their colleagues, the enabling constraining nature of relationships and with no mention of the possibility of the feeling body.

Throughout my inquiry I focus on critical moments that have led to a heightened awareness of evolving power relations. These experiences of heightened tension are both located and described corporeally whilst being linked or experienced as emotions.

Elias' focus on the emotional aspect of human beings illuminates this discussion,

> A further aspect of Elias' approach is the emphasis he places on the importance of human emotion. He argues that human beings are not merely cognitive animals but also emotional animals and that all our actions, without exception, involve a mixture of cognition and emotion.
>
> (Dopson:2001:518)

There is not enough written about this embodied, or even emotional, nature of consulting. As my narratives portray, it is in these moments of strong emotion, corporeally experienced, where something novel occurs. There is a connection between these moments and shifting power relations. My sense of intentions evolving and patterning the conversations seems to coincide with transformative moments for my clients and myself. This is very different from the sort of intentions described in much of the prevailing management discourse. I am not suggesting that consultants lack corporeal awareness, or emotional engagement, however it is frequently unmentioned and further research and discussion would be a contribution.

This awareness is particularly significant in moments of evolving power relations as will be discussed in the next section.

Inclusion and exclusion; the impact on consultancy

It is often in those instants of evolving power relations that novelty occurs. Thus the role of power, as an enabling-constraining aspect of any relationship, has become increasingly significant in understanding my professional practice. It is in these new patternings of consultant-client relationships that transformation occurs.

In Project Two, I discuss Elias and Scotson's (1965) work on the established and the outsider, illuminating the significance of evolving power relations within that client relationship. I reflect extensively upon a meeting with a business sponsor, describing my sense of shame as I listened to a senior executive gossiping about my client. I consider the role of my fear of exclusion in the co-creation of this meeting and the impact on my relationship with my client. It was after this meeting I said that I would work with her, until then I had been undecided.

Elias (1939) posits that interaction comprises power relationships, arguing that by entering into any relationship we constrain (and enable) and are constrained (and enabled) by those with whom we engage. In the work with Scotson (1965) he shows how relationships include some and exclude others and how these figurations favour some at the expense of others. In their discussion of Winston Parva, these feeling are experienced as a sense of 'we', which are inseparable from 'I', and contrasted with the 'they' of the outsiders. In instants where the ebb and flow of inclusion and exclusion are experienced, habitual responses are interrupted, novelty occurs and new patterns of relating evolve. Thus I am relating the 'interruption of habitual action', in which intentions emerge, to evolving power relations and novel conversations. As a consultant I am aware of the importance of being present and engaged in these moments whereby my skill enables me to engage, not control, thereby influencing the conversation. Elias (1978) describes power in terms of dependency. When we are more dependent on others than they are on us, they have more power. Power is not a thing possessed by certain individuals, rather a function of relationships, figurations in interactions wherein power ebbs and flows.

This view of power is often ignored when consultant-client relationships are discussed. There seems to be an assumption that the power lies within the client, usually senior sponsors, and as a consultant, we have little power. In Elias' terms, this will tilt according to dependence.

Naturally these relations are important, they affect our livelihood. Greiner & Poulfelt (2005) highlight the importance of long-term relationships with clients selling consultancy,

> … the general norm in many consulting firms is to strive for long term relationships with clients – estimates are that at least 60% of current consulting revenues originate from….The essential elements of trust and credibility are already established.
>
> (Greiner & Poulfelt:2005:16)

However, if I do not wish to work with a client, the dependency tilts and the power relations evolves.

The next section considers identity formation and consultant-client relationships; an area frequently overlooked in the management literature.

Identity formation and consultant-client relationships

As my research continued to evolve, I focussed on the fundamental interdependence of human beings, (Elias, 1970). In reading Joas' (1996) work I build on his discussion about the three-part nature of action and intention as emergent, corporeal and social; his focus on the primary sociality of human beings relates to identity, which he develops by building on Mead. After my progression viva, my inquiry evolved into a focus on identity, and management consulting.

In Project Four, I describe my experience of feeling excluded from a group, and my irate, though unspoken, reflections. I realised that I had seen myself as the leader of the group, and I describe my sense of anger and anxiety as the group develop new patterns of relating from which I felt excluded. I depict my developing awareness of how important it had been previously to feel part of the group. Whilst reflecting on this, and in discussing my experience later with the group, I recognise how, through the social act, my interaction with clients is a continuous process of construction and reconstruction. My previous view of myself as both part of the group, and yet able to lead and guide, was based on a fantasy of myself as autonomous, independent and all-powerful. This had a profound impact on my sense of

identity, which indicates my challenge to the prevailing view of the consultant coming in from the outside, and then returning, unchanged, from whence he or she came.

Elias (1991) compares the network of relationships.

> In the same way, ideas, convictions, affects, needs and character traits are produced in the individual through intercourse with others, things that make up his most personal "self" and in which is expressed, for this very reason, the network of relations from which he has emerged and into which and into which he passes. And in this way this self, this personal essence, is formed in a continuous interweaving of needs, a constant desire and fulfilment, an alternative taking and giving. It is the order of this incessant interweaving without a beginning that determines the nature and form of the individual human being.
>
> (Elias:1991:33)

Assuming the fundamental social and interdependent nature of human interaction, I am claiming that identity formation is a crucial, and frequently overlooked, aspect of management consultancy.

Theories of identity and self

What follows is a brief overview of the views of the self that have informed my inquiry, I consider these before discussing identity formation as a function of consultant-client relationships,. Although, throughout my work, there is a sense of identity forming and being formed, it is in Project Four that I reconsider what I mean by identity and discuss the implications for my practice.

When doing my Masters in Psychology we had focussed on notions of the identity as some 'thing' that got formed by a certain age. Nevertheless I'd had an underlying sense of unease about this unproblematic view of an unchanging self, given that I would talk about my work as occasionally transformational. When running an MSc in Consultancy in the late eighties, I argued with a participant, when she claimed that 'consultants are born, not trained', asking what then was the purpose of this programme. As I was lecturing in process consultancy, I

had a sense that there was something personally transformative about consultant-client relationships.

On starting my inquiry, my view of identity was heavily influenced by Mead (1934). In making sense of his view of the intrinsically social nature of human beings whereby the self evolves within individuals' social interaction it seemed obvious that this process continues throughout the life of human beings. Indeed Mead (1913) details an instant of when the self evolves,

> When, however, an essential problem appears, there is some disintegration in this organization, and different tendencies appear in reflective thought as different voices in conflict with each other. In a sense the old self has disintegrated, and out of the moral process a new self arises.
>
> (Mead:1913:378)

Hence Mead is describing an interruption, in this case related to values, to elucidate how the self evolves, which compares with the interruption to pre-reflective aspirations, (Joas, 1996) leading to emerging intentions and novelty, (Dewey, 1917).

Elias (1938) describes how civilizations evolved through figurations of interdependent people. In his later development of this work, Elias (1991) emphasised that aspects of the self, or

> 'psyche' are functions which – unlike the stomach or the bones - ,… are *directed* constantly *towards other people* and things. They are particular *forms of a person's self-regulation in relation to other people and things.'*
>
> (Elias:1991:37)

Therefore we do not exist in a solitary manner, but develop through engagement with others within networks of relationships.

Based on the work of Mead and Elias I consider identity to be:

- Interdependent, yet distinguishable (one from another);
- Paradoxically both recognisable and novel

- Both continuous and containing the possibility for transformation;
- Emerging in particular, through shifting power relations and provocative or traumatic events.

It was necessary to limit my literature overview given the vast amount of literature. Therefore I focus on seminal management and sociological literature, as these disciplines have played a significant role throughout my research.

Stets & Burke's (2003) describe the emergent self as organised into multiple parts, which they relate to the different social structures within which these parts have emerged; comparing this with Mead's components of self. Stryker (1980) has built on Mead's work but developed his notion of identity with regard to salience and commitment, linking people's willingness to act out an identity to both relative importance and the strength and complexity of significant relationships. McCall & Simons (1978), whilst agreeing with the import of salience, relate it to external reinforcement; thus they describe role identity as a function of a 'hierarchy of prominence' that relates to the 'ideal self' (ibid, p.74). Whilst these views are developed from Mead, with identity perceived to be a process, they overlook the way in which identity evolves within the enabling constraining context of social interaction, which means that individuals may not always choose which aspect of their identity or self emerges.

Elias (1991) argued that human beings are fundamentally interdependent. He describes the way in which people are 'tied by invisible chains to other people', (p14), continuing that we have lived, since childhood, in a network of interdependencies. We do not choose to change in a moment but evolve, in as much as the figuration in which we are involved, allows. Linking this with his work on the enabling-constraining nature of relationships, I identify implications for consultant-client relationships, through making sense of organisational incidents. Through our experience of exclusion or inclusion, relational patterns evolve where novel, or unappreciated aspects of the self may emerge.

Mead (1934) has argued that we are not a 'prisoner in a cell… shut up in his own cell of consciousness…' (p.6). Mead describes language as human beings conversing through a gesture response as a temporal, not sequential, process. Mead (1913) describes the interrelationship in one self, interacting with another self, depicting how the self is inherently social and evolving.

The "I" of introspection is the self, which enters into social relations with other selves. It is not the "I" that is implied in the fact that one presents himself as a "me." And the "me" of introspection is the same "me" that is the object of the social conduct with others. One presents himself as acting towards others – in this presentation he is presented in indirect discourse as the subject of the action and is still an object – and the subject of this presentation can never appear immediately in conscious experience. It is the same self who is presented as observing himself, and he effects himself just in so far and only in so far as he can address himself by the means of social stimulation which effect others. The "me" whom he addresses is the "me," therefore, that is similarly affected by the social conduct of those about him.

(Mead:1913:375)

Bakhtin (1981) focuses on the fundamentally social nature of conversation, 'verbal discourse is a social phenomenon – social throughout its entire range and in each and every of its factors' (p 259). Bakhtin is in opposition to the Cartesian view, not believing in an entity situated inside, and separated from the body, he argues that 'I am conscious of myself and become myself only while revealing myself for another, through another, and with the help of another', (Bakhtin 1984, p.287), echoing Mead's assertion that we evolve in conversations with others.

Jabri (2004) in his discussion of the implications of Bakhtin's view of identity says, 'identities are co-constructed through an ongoing exchange of utterances… that identity is fluid, playful, intermingling, and ambiguous' (p.571), thus identity is relational. Jabri highlights what this implies for change management, I will discuss this when considering the implications for management consultancy.

Management consulting and identity formation

Before highlighting my original contribution to management consultancy, I would like to consider the variety of activities that may be described as consulting, indicating what a broad church it is.

The consultant spotter's handbook

The trusted business adviser …the consultant engaged in armchair conversations with chief executives, offering solace as well as solutions, being coach and mentor rather than technician.

The good sales angel ...discern and analyse client needs; … formulate propositions… articulate the issue and craft an appropriate solution.

The bad sales angel … offers only stock solutions … more geared to talking at clients than listening to them.

The experienced farmer … the specialist who can draw on in-depth technical knowledge and a wide experiential base…

The scientist ...the highly rational analyst who goes to a greater level of detail than most clients think possible in order to generate insights.

The marathon runner The implementation specialist who wants to get in the trenches; ironically… these are the best collaborators.

The pointy head … The laboratory or desk expert…, taken along by a colleague to wow clients with their technical knowledge.

(Toppin & Czerniawska:2005:108)

This is a thorough description of the types of work done by consultants, there is a sense of the consultant as separate and independent in her work, which ignores the richness of relationships. I do not believe many consultants see themselves as distinct and separate from clients, indeed the nature of some of these roles, '*The trusted business adviser',* implies a close relationship. My criticism is that this relationship is frequently overlooked in the depictions of consulting projects; my inquiry challenges the somewhat disembodied transactional descriptions. I am developing my view of consultant-client relationships, highlighting the fundamental interdependence of people and the concomitant interaction whereby all are affected by the relationships; in particular the co-creation of consultants-client relationship and the possible impact on both clients and consultants. Given the different types of activities described as consulting I have chosen three prevailing approaches for the purposes of comparison; product, process models Schein (1969) and organisational change management, (Beckhard, 1997).

A comparison of approaches to consultancy

	Product Consulting	Process Consulting	Organisational Change Management	Consulting as complex responsive processes of relating
Assumptions about clients	Clients need help in diagnosing problems, and need outside expertise and advice, (Nadler & Slywotzky, 2005)	Clients need to be helped by the consultants to understand problems and develop relevant skills, (Schein, 1999)	Clients need management consultants to manage change projects, (Caldwell, 2003)	Clients are in conversation with consultants interdependently co-creating conversations wherein new intentions, themes and patterns of relating evolve
Intervention	Resolves problems, leaving an improved organisation	Helps others to develop knowledge and expertise	Provide and manage an agreed project (or programme)	Engaging with the client, in the living present, with an awareness of power relating and a focus on embodiment; transformation may occur
Intentions	Objectives are agreed in advance, usually between consultants and senior management	Clients and consultants work together to determine what the issues are and how they may be resolved	Clear structured project guidelines agreed, with timed deadlines.	Intentions emerge in conversations with the clients and become organising themes for future conversations.
Impact on client	Issues have been resolved	Clients left with the skills and knowledge to solve problems	Clients have developed new expertise, organisation has improved	New conversations have evolved and their identity may have evolved
Impact on consultant	The consultant's identity is static, success may lead to more work	The consultant's identity is static. Success may lead to more work and understanding their own practice	The consultant's identity is static. Possibility to understand and develop practice and to get repeat work.	The consultant's identity may evolve and there is the possibility of developing own practice. Success could lead to more work.
Consultant-client relationship	The consultant diagnoses problems and recommends solutions a transactional view of human interaction	The consultant works closely with the client helping clients to develop	A change agent facilitates the project, helping clients to develop and change.	The consultant works with the client whereby themes emerge and intentions evolve in a co-created conversation. Patterns of inclusion and exclusion impact may be highlighted.
Organisational Change Model	This is based on an empirical approach, assuming human's are rational and evidence driven	Change occurs through facilitation, by the consultant of the client; and emphasises the natural will of human beings to grow.	If the project is managed correctly and certain, pre-determined steps are followed, organisational and cultural change will occur	New patterns of relating and conversation will emerge; through local interaction, global patterns may emerge

Whilst other terminology is also used, Constructivist Consultants, (Abell & Simons, 2000), Trusted Adviser, (de Haan, 2006), the three I have chosen are recognisable as distinctions in the literature. The point that I am making is not that the management consultants categorised in this way necessarily relate to clients as the literature portrays, rather that the issues taken up in the literature focuses on some aspects of the work at the expense of others. What follows is a brief overview of these approaches, making sense of consultant-client relationships with regard to themes pertinent to my research. I have added a section comparing these approaches with how I make sense of my professional practice. I will then discuss the implications both for the points taken up in the literature, and how consultants may enhance their understanding of their work.

Product/Expert Consultant

Nadler & Slywotzky (2005) describe how consultants with an expertise, provide their services to an organisation. They discuss how the project is agreed with senior staff and then consultants work with employees to develop new systems or processes. This is handed over to the clients who take over the new approach. There is a disembodied and unreal sense to these descriptions of working with clients.

This approach is carried to an extreme in writings on lean-sigma, which has become very popular with one of my major clients, a large retail bank.

> Lean Six Sigma is the latest evolutionary step in the history of manufacturing that marries Ford's Lean Flow manufacturing process of the early 1900s with the Six Sigma process created by Motorola Corp. in the 1980s.
>
> (Brett & Quinn:2005:58)

In this approach the Lean Six Sigma consultants define the situation with regard to significant processes, measure the current situation, analyse where any 'bottleneck' is occurring and emphasise where value is not being added and getting rid of waste, (this may include employees). They recommend solutions and put in controls to ensure that the improvements are maintained. Throughout the discussions of this approach (Brett and Queen, 2005; Cveykus & Carter 2006, Bendell, 2005; Knowles et al 2005) there is no mention of people, despite the

recommendations of an eventual industrialisation of the process, and the concomitant internal lean-sigma consultants. The discussions relate to supply chains, processes, technology and culture change. This seems to occur in organisations peopled by processes, rather than human beings. There is a fundamental assumption of people as rational and logical. The literature is underpinned by an supposition that consultants are independent of their clients and autonomous in their actions. At Xeno this is linked to their 'One Best Way', against which everything is measured.

This expert approach to consultancy is based on a transactional approach to human behaviour and underpinned by a transmission model of communication. I have argued against this approach citing the work of Mead wherein conversation consists of gesture-response, Joas' (1996) explanation of creative action as emergent, social and corporeal and finally Elias' argument for the interdependence of people. This model ignores the way in which global patterns can emerge from local interactions (Stacey, 2003). I have posited that consultancy is a responsive process within which client and consultant are interdependent and the relationship is both enabling and constraining. Product consulting is underpinned by several assumptions,

- the consultant delivers the product (knowledge, expertise etc) to the organisation with the support of senior executives;
- the organisation is viewed as a system;
- consultants and their clients are autonomous independent, logical individuals who work together and are left unchanged (in identity terms) by the relationship.

The assumption is that management consulting is conducted through a rational approach, based on logical precepts. I am arguing that consultancy is a responsive process, co-created in conversations with clients and consultants. I challenge, throughout my inquiry, the notion of human beings as independent and autonomous, arguing that we are social and interdependent. Intentions are conceptualised as plans, pre-determined with senior staff at the beginning of the project.

On the Accenture web site, intentions are described as thoughts, which lead to action, 'A more likely sort of aggregation for consumers would be on the basis of **intentions** - the desire

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to accomplish a broad business or personal objective' in practice, I believe people are much more adaptive about their objectives.

Through my inquiry I show how, in conversations with clients, new thematic patternings emerge and organise conversations in novel and unexpected ways, discussing how consultancy is co-created, rather than delivered. I also challenge the way in which power is perceived to be owned by senior people and determined by their role in an organisation, thus ignoring the evolving, shifting power relations within consultant-client relationships.

This approach, as described, does not convey a sense of a consultant-client relationship. Yet when I participated in a symposium about 'Lean Consulting'; a conversation between consultants and clients, there was a powerful consultant-client relationship. They were collegial, sharing rich conversations; client and consultants supported each other, joking and telling stories. This is not clear when reading the literature. Thus, in practice, the approach is not as mechanistic and disembodied as it may appear in the literature, and in challenging these descriptions, researchers/consultants could deepen their understanding of what is actually happening in these projects.

Process Consultancy

In Project Four I discuss Schein (1999), who originally distinguished between process and product consulting (Schein 1969). He proposes process consultancy as the more powerful approach. This approach is based on the work of Rogers (1967), and is underpinned by the assumption that the client understands the problems and fundamentally knows the answers. Essentially Schein argues that a consultant is not there to give knowledge, (as if knowledge was a thing, and people empty vessels); rather the consultant builds a particular relationship with the client. This relationship is such that the client is helped to understand the issues and solutions for him or herself. Therefore in this approach the consultant requires the skills to build relationships in which the client is empowered; the process consultant is a facilitator who acts as a catalyst for clients' learning. Nevertheless the consultant will often have a relevant industry or skills base. This was the precursor to many of the more collaborative approaches, which have developed over the last three decades. As I mention in Project One this was the approach that I espoused through the MSc in Consultancy with Cranfield.

Abell & Simons (2000) describe their practice as 'narratively-oriented, collaborative, non-hierarchical, and emergent ways of working' (p. 160). Nevertheless when problems emerged and clients withdrew or became critical they respond by introducing some client-friendly artefacts. They describe their difficulties as a 'culture clash' (ibid p. 159), related to a conflict between their 'feminist perspective' and the 'hegemonic masculinist organisational cultures' (ibid, p.174). They discuss how important it is to remain true to their beliefs and respond to the clients concerns with cosmetic change. Despite their claim that their work was co-constructed and emergent, their writing indicates a view that they are in control of the situation, they respond to their clients' concerns by changing small aspects of their practice. They do not acknowledge that within a co-constructed and emergent conversation the consultants are unable to determine the outcomes but can only participate in conversations responsively. In this way intentions emerge and identities evolve. Although they talk about learning from the experience, as do their clients, they do not refer to the possible impact on identity. Given that they are assuming a social constructionist view of consulting, it is surprising that they do not mention Gergen's (2000) work on the 'saturated self', as I discuss in Project Four.

This collaborative work is written from the perspective of remaining in conversation with clients, nevertheless they do not rigorously examine the relational aspects of consultants working with permanent staff, the many conversations, and the way in which themes emerge and new patterns occur. They make no reference to the tensions of being paradoxically both an insider and an outsider. I have no sense of the consultant being aware of how they are, or are not, interdependently working with clients, nor how or if they may be affected. There is no reference to how, given the interdependent and social nature of human beings, in working with clients, our identities are forming and being formed, and yet when talking with process consultants, it is obvious that relationships are key. Again a more detailed examination of these relationships would indicate that this is a more responsive approach than it may appear.

Organisational change management

Caldwell (2003) describes consultants as providing, 'advice, expertise, project management … or process skill in facilitating change'. The required change has been previously agreed, and the consultant's job is to make it happen. Thus any intentions are agreed, pre-planned and

existing in the minds of individuals, assuming that the consultant is an 'autonomous, independent individual, or team' who have responsibility for changing the organisation. In Caldwell's description it seems that the consultant can be both part of, and external to, a system that they can modify. There is no suggestion that the consultant will be altered by this experience, although it is assumed that clients' behaviour may change.

Appreciative Inquiry was developed in the late eighties and has been applied extensively in large multi nationals, (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). It is based on certain assumptions. Cooperrider (2007)

> organizations are a social reality and social reality is *co-constructed* – we create the social systems we are in through our interactions with each other;

> organizations are not like machines – they don't have an objective reality the way a table or a rock does;

> important human processes like communication, decision-making, and conflict management are affected more by how the people involved make meaning out of their interactions than by skilful application of any particular technique

> attempts to find or develop the right formula for successful leadership and change are a misguided attempt to treat social reality as if it were objective reality

> (Cooperrider:2007:3)

Essentially AI focuses on the positive stories in organisations, with the assumption that people will learn from each other's positive experiences and both build and focus on these. In AI the consultant helps the clients, 'discover, what gives life (appreciating), … dream what might be (envisioning results), … design (what should be – the ideal), … distinguish destiny (how to empower, learn and adjust/improvise), (ibid p. 30). An interesting aspect of this approach is that the change and the inquiry take place at the same time and that the change grows from a focus on the positive. Whilst this approach is collaborative and co-constructed with the client, the main difference between this work and my own is that I have no sense from the literature that in this process there is any fundamental impact on the consultant.

Whitney & Trosten-Bloom (2003), in their discussion of AI, stress the importance of working alongside the client; nevertheless they enter the organisation with a clear agenda of how the change will be enacted. Part of the consultant's role is to ask the 'right questions', indeed they include an example of an important aspect of their inquiry in their 'Mini-Interview "Core Questions"', (ibid, p140), of course there will be differences in the way in which AI is approached, but there is a sense of a clear path to be followed, rather than intentions emerging in the moment. There is no indication that identities are forming and being formed in the consultant-client relationship.

Nevertheless in conversations with change managers they will frequently focus on relationship issues and negotiating new agreements, which could be seen as emerging themes, but the definitions seem to pick up on other, non-relational aspects.

Quinn & Quinn (2005) describe themselves as Transformational Change Agents; their work is interesting in that they challenge the authenticity of many consulting projects. They describe how consultants and senior executives collude in not genuinely wanting to change. They ask 'do I have a vision of the common good?' and describe their approach as emergent and allowing for chaos. By asking if I, the consultant, have a vision of the common good, this implies that I am, in some way, liable, thereby implying a control over the client and myself. It is clear that they assume that human beings are independent rather than interdependent. Their model of consultancy suggests that they can enter into consultant-client relationships with certain intentions that they can fulfil, they say,

> I know that by being more internally driven and other focussed, I will begin to make decisions that can benefit more people than myself. I will try to look past my deceptions and the deceptions of others. I will constantly need to ask myself, what can I change to improve a relationship or situation.

> (Quinn & Quinn:2005:266)

Whilst I respect the values of these writers, I challenge their autonomy, arguing that within the conversations with clients, as new themes evolve, I am part of co-created conversations. Hence I cannot stand outside the relationship and remain unchanged, indeed earlier the first author highlights the need to change. Quinn & Quinn (2005) raise important questions and allude to the need for the consultant to continually 'move toward higher and higher

consciousness' (ibid p. 255), suggesting an awareness of the need for consultants to be open to be changed. Despite my respect for what they are trying to achieve, I challenge their assumed autonomy. As consultants we are engaged in conversations in which patterns emerge, new themes evolve and both client and consultant are participating in an activity in which identity formation may occur. I cannot assume that my relationship will ensure organisational change but in our conversations new patterns emerge and identities form and are formed. Thus through these local interactions, global change can emerge (Stacey, 2003).

Jabri (2004) talks about change agency in relation to shifting identities,

> There is a need for change management to revise its assumptions by understanding change in terms of shifting identities and relationships accomplished through utterances (words or sentences; spoken or written) rather than in terms of identity based in order and coherence fixed in narratives.
>
> (Jabri:2004:566)

Jabri clearly conceptualises identity as a process, and is also challenging the way in which identity is conceptualised as a story agreed and told by the narrator. He highlights the implications for consultancy,

> To what extent do identities continuously change and how do they do so in the "new dispensation" (that is not so much in an orderly evolution, but in some disarray driven from within by language)? How should change managers allow for shifting identities (among organisation members) that are dependent on an ongoing process of mediated self-reflection, accomplished through speech?
>
> (Jabri:2004:566)

By questioning how the consultant should 'allow for shifting identities', he is assuming both that the consultant manages this identity formation, and ignoring any possible impact on the consultant's identity. There is still a sense that the consultant is in control, and unaffected. As with the previous approaches I think that this is a way of writing about consulting. Thus I am not suggesting that consultants are not affected, fundamentally, by their consulting experiences, but that it is not picked up on in the prevailing literature.

Consulting as complex responsive processes of relating: my original contribution.

Complex responsive processes thinking is not a technology, nevertheless through engaging with this work and researching my practice, my client work has evolved. Given that this is a practice-based doctorate it is important to consider the implications of my research for both my professional practice and that of other practitioners.

From a personal perspective it is an interesting mixture. As I research my work evolves. I scrutinise my work through narrative inquiry, as a socially reflexive investigation. In addition I examine my work whilst deeply engaged with complex responsive processes thinking. This impacts how I make sense of my work as a researcher-consultant. In a sense the question is so what? Undoubtedly my understanding of my practice has evolved, both in terms of understanding what I do and the actual activities of my practice but what does that mean for how I approach to consultant-client relationships, and what could other practitioners learn?

The notion of intentions as evolving has, in some ways, been an issue with me for years. My experience working with people had led me to believe that setting objectives prior to the engagement was slightly unreal. When I first worked with a leadership team a senior participant asked me for my project objectives. I was astonished saying, 'surely that is up to you'. Nevertheless I felt uneasy and at the beginning of that programme discussed team objectives. Through enquiring into intention, and planning, as an emergent phenomenon I have gained the confidence to discuss my work differently. When I first meet with a client I do not discuss objectives, I ask them why they want to work with me, what are they hoping for, but not what their objectives are. At Xeno I am no longer asked the question.

In my work with senior executives, I focus and comment upon how power relations evolve and pattern conversations. In being aware and willing to comment it is possible to see patterns that evolve in the group rather than focus on the outcomes. In Project Four, I describe feeling upset by an experience of exclusion with a group of clients. Through reflexively enquiry into the experience, I realised that I had felt excluded from the evolving power relations. Through making sense of this new pattern of relating I felt able to talk to them, telling them about Elias' work on inclusion/exclusion. Previously I would have felt upset but ignored it, carrying on with 'leading the project'. Through this conversation new themes developed and participants started

to see how they could continue with a new piece of work, which they have continued since the project finished. Thus as power relating evolves, intentions emerge as themes organising conversations, which move from stuck to free flowing. Something new, or novel, evolves.

I no longer feel required to provide answers or be responsible for the conversation. More recently, in letting go of my fantasy of leading conversations, I have noticed clients becoming more engaged with discussions, more combative with each other and me. They no longer look to me to answer questions. Previously these sessions seemed dyadic, with people questioning me, and me responding, or encouraging others to respond, now the conversations are freer flowing. We read books and discuss them rather than me reading the book and telling them what it says. Even introducing the notion of them reading in order to debate is new to my practice, and although many of my clients have MBAs they do not normally critique management research, so for them it has been interesting to engage in intellectual debate, rather than being instructed. They comment on how this has been remarkable and challenging.

Throughout my inquiries, I demonstrate a new way of understanding my professional practice, which has implications for who I am. In examining my work I argue that I am making sense of consulting in a way that fundamentally differs the prevailing management literature. I describe how in paying attention to conversation within the living present, I notice my bodily responses as a way of becoming conscious of the patterns of power relating, which indicate new themes evolving, allowing new conversations to emerge. Previously I had overlooked my bodily responses in reflections on my practice. Of course they were present, but I would ignore, rather than examine them.

 My explicit focus on embodiment in management consulting distinguishes my work from other models, not only with regard to noticing my bodily responses but also others'. Of course most consultants are aware of the importance of noticing our physical responses to other people and before I began this inquiry my attention to 'body language' was an important aspect of my practice. I am arguing beyond observing others' corporeal response, rather that the importance of a heightened awareness of one's own embodiment, plus a willingness to discuss this with clients, enhances our practice as management consultants.

My professional practice continues to evolve in a way that is a contribution to how consultancy is normally conceptualised. I am arguing that, de facto, consultants working with

clients are working interdependently and therefore their identity may evolve. Previously I was aware of the importance of being present when with clients, focussing on being 'in the moment' when working, I now understand presence differently. Friis (2006) portrays 'being present' as an energy and focus that means you are unaware of anything else around you. He refers to the work of Johnstone (1989) who develops the concept of presence as an openness to being changed by what you are experiencing; therefore by being present in the interaction of consultant-client relationships I am open to being changed. Thus my identity may evolve.

I am not implying that management consultants believe that they are unchanged by consulting, when I presented my paper at the Copenhagen Business School a management consultant said ' Of course we are all learning from projects', hence people are aware that they do not emerge unaffected by their consulting work. I have established two, more fundamental aspects to consultant-client relationships, our clients, and we, may change fundamentally through our engagement and that these consequences for consultants are frequently overlooked.

A recent definition of leadership resonates with my view of consulting Williams (2006).

> This is a view of leadership that indicates the fundamentally social interdependence of human beings, illuminating the way in which in conversation our identities are formed and being formed; not in a unidirectional manner, leader to colleague, consultant to client, but in a multi dimensional manner.
>
> Williams:2006:10

Throughout my research, I have examined my professional practice from a social and interdependent perspective, (Shaw, 2002; Stacey, 2003; Elias, 1964 and Mead, 1934), further developing my professional practice, whilst my identity has been evolving. Through this inquiry I have gained a new way of understanding management consulting, which contributes to both the academy of management researchers and fellow practitioners.

I pick up on ignored aspects of consultant-client relationships; evolving intentions and identity formation, even where there is mention of emergence (Cooperrider, 2007 Abell & Simons, 2000; Quinn & Quinn, 2005), the full implications are not discussed. I have described the practice of consultancy as a series of conversations with interdependent people

within which themes can emerge and organise new conversations in an iterative and reflexive manner. I argue that my identity is evolving; through engagement with the doctoral process, my involvement with the literature and in pursuance of my inquiry; as are my clients'. I explore our open-ended responsiveness to one another in consulting projects, whilst noticing my anxiety in considering what I can actually offer clients, I no longer have the safety of a 'plan, implement, evaluate' (Dembitz & Essinger, 2000) approach to my projects.

I am developing the work of others in the field of management consultancy as complex responsive processes of relating, building in particular on the work of Larsen, (2006) who links spontaneity and evolving power relations; similarly I relate emerging intentions and identity formation to moments where power relations evolve and new patterns of conversation emerge. I demonstrate the need for management consultants to pay attention, in each moment, noting evolving power relations in order to influence the emergence of novel conversations and ways of relating

Before pursing this inquiry, I considered myself a consultant or coach who was knowledgeable in the field of leadership and could help others develop their leadership skills, hence, I could have been described as an expert consultant. As my thinking has shifted I have reconsidered the nature of my professional practice. Previously I argued that I negotiated work with clients, nevertheless I still planned work that would 'transform clients' leadership', and I was unaware of how I may be fundamentally affected within the conversations. I am influenced throughout my inquiry by complex responsive processes thinking, which conceptualises the self as forming and being formed through processes of social interaction. As a result of my research I explain how identity formation is a fundamental aspect of the consultant-client relationship, thereby challenging the prevailing view in the literature wherein consultants are viewed as being independent and mainly unchanged by working with clients.

In developing my view of consulting as co-created I appraise my experience, as a consultant, and examine how Mead's (1934) notion of a reflexive, social self has facilitated a new way of understanding my practice. I distinguish the implications for other researchers and practitioners. I have become dissatisfied with work, which has been important to me in the past, (Rogers, 1967; Buber, 1937 Goleman, 1996; Covey, 1999 and Galway, 2000), due to

their assumption that the individual self is formed independently, thereby ignoring the group processes of interaction.

My inquiry has highlighted the significance for management consultants of realising the fundamentally social nature of human interaction. Through understanding conversation as a pattern of gesture/ response (Mead 1934) I am making sense of the consultant-client relationship as co-created and therefore not to be ordered by the consultant. Thus I have explored consultancy as a relationship where it is only possible, 'to explain the conduct of the individual in terms of the organised conduct of the social group', (ibid p 7).

Elias influences my thinking with regard to the fundamental interdependence of human beings. The assumption that human beings are social and interdependent, rather than independent, autonomous individuals underpins my view of consultant-client relationships. In recognising the importance of the social nature of my professional practice I encourage clients to involve me in their daily work context. In writing the narratives I iteratively reflected upon how conversations are co-created with clients. The emergence of new narratives, evolving from a previously stuck conversation, highlight how there is an inherent fantasy in depicting the consultant going into an organisation to implement a programme, and then withdrawing having fulfilled objectives. Nevertheless the consultant, by remaining present to micro-interactions, may influence but not order conversations. This attention to their own experience will enhance the consultant's ability to participate fully, enhancing evolving themes and intentions, and encouraging novelty.

Even with more collaborative approached there is still a sense of the consultant as an independent agent, resuming life unchanged after leaving a project. The manner in which management consultants engage with clients, given the social, interdependent nature of human beings, means that our professional practice is inherently unpredictable. This does not imply it is not creative, indeed by acknowledging the co-creation of conversations, and focussing on the moment, we can contribute to these conversations, and make a difference in the organisation. However the results cannot be pre-determined. Whilst most management consultants are aware of this, it needs more discussion and research.

Despite the brevity of my consideration of different approaches to management consultancy, I do not think that they are atypical in assuming that human beings are rational, autonomous

and independent, as opposed to my assumption that we are social, corporeal and interdependent. In reading much of the literature there is a limited relational view, creating a somewhat ghostly sense of clients and consultants.

Hence whilst much consultancy work focuses on collaboration with clients, there is a lack of reference to how the consultant and client may evolve within a consultative relationship and the uncertainty of how in conversations, new intentions emerge, encouraging creative and new ways of relating. In some of the literature there is clear collaboration with regard to planning a project, e.g. Open Space, (McLean, 2006), Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider, 2007) and Search conferences (Worley & Cummings, 2005). This could be considered emergent planning, thus imply emerging intentions, nevertheless at some stage the consultants and clients distinguish a plan, which is seen to be complete. Whilst many of the issues that I have highlighted may impact on their work, this is rarely picked up on in the literature.

My way of describing my professional practice is fundamentally different from much of the prevailing literature. My practice is now informed by my view that consultants and clients are interdependently co-creating conversations wherein new conversations and patterns of relating evolve. Given that human beings are interdependent, when I am working with the client, I am aware of the enabling constraining nature of our relationships and I focus on embodiment and the patterning of emerging conversations, wherein identity may have evolved and novel, and creative ways, of relating may emerge.

Conclusion

Throughout this inquiry I have detailed my new understanding of consultancy. I have described how I now understand my work in terms of co-created conversations in which identities continue to evolve. I have discussed an emergent, social, corporeal view of intention challenging my own, and others' preconceptions about consultancy practice. I adopt a complex responsive processes approach to my work and I have elucidated the implications in terms of emergent identity, intention and power. I have summarised my inquiry within the context of narratives about my own practice highlighting the importance for consultants of understanding their fundamental interdependence with clients and the implications for identity formation, thereby challenging the notion of consultants as independent, autonomous agents implementing change in the clients, whilst remaining fundamentally unaffected observers. In

elucidating my research methods I have examined consultant-client relationships through a variety of organisational incidents, to highlight how intentions emerge and identities form and are formed. The rest of this work details my research.

Project One

Themes, Dreams and Nightmares

Introduction

In this project I describe some of the arresting moments and significant theories that have affected my professional practice. I begin to explore complex responsive processes thinking and the implications for my thinking and practice. It is axiomatic that in any narrative one history emerges out of many possible versions, in this work the narratives will be compared briefly with some earlier biographical work. Thus with each iteration a new history emerges, and I create my history in the present, via the past and into the future.

> Meaning is not simply located in the past (gesture) or the future (response) but in the circular interaction between the two in the living present. In this way the present is not simply a point but has a time structure. Mead talked about a continuous process of gesture and response. Every gesture is a response to some previous gesture, which is a response to an even earlier one thereby constructing history.

> (Stacey:2003a:61)

Several research questions have started to emerge in the process of writing this paper. These include how can I work with clients and 'agree on outcomes', in emergent relationships, and how can I offer unconditional regard in co-created conversations. I briefly consider how I describe my professional practice; executive coach, management consultant, leadership consultant? Power is an emerging shadow theme. These themes are discussed within the context of my biographical narrative.

Early Influences

My first degree was in philosophy.

In every history of philosophy for students, the first thing mentioned is that philosophy began with Thales, who said that everything is made of water. This is discouraging for the beginner.

(Russell:1946:33)

Russell was wrong; Greek Philosophy, formal logic and Wittgenstein inspired me. At the end of three years, I knew how to ask a good question, but very little else. However knowing nothing and asking questions had inspired my passion for learning, motivating me to continue to develop, understand and make sense of my work.

Emerging values and passions

On finishing my degree I trained to be a teacher, working in the East End of London. I enjoyed the kids, the life and the politics of the time. In particular I enjoyed working with disturbed children and was fortunate in finding work in a large special school called Whitefield.

After two years I was seconded to Exeter University. My degree focussed on behavioural psychology and some of the emerging cognitive behaviour therapists,(Ellis, 2007; Bandura, 1997). The course concentrated on the application of a behavioural approach to working with disturbed children and adults. I completed my degree with a dissertation comparing the work of Freud and Skinner.

On my return to Whitefield I adopted a behavioural approach, (Skinner, 1971). However I knew behaviourism had limitations and used reinforcement as a teaching tool, rather than a philosophy of human behaviour. Whilst reinforcement was useful, I knew that my relationship with the children was vital to their learning.

Recently somebody asked me to list some of my greatest achievements. The first item was 'teaching Debbie to read'. Debbie was a severely maltreated girl, who displayed her anger with life in a very straightforward manner. She screamed **** off, threw chairs, stole and hit other children and teachers. I adored her. She was fun, brave and tremendously affectionate. I was furious on reading her reading records. She had spent four years on the same two reading

books. I taught her phonics, rewarding her with a visit to the shop every Friday for a mars bar or chocolate éclair. At the end of our two terms together she said *'I have read five books with you'*. Although I was using a primary reinforcer, I believe that our relationship was fundamental to her learning. I took her home, visited her in foster care and twice persuaded her mother to let me take her out. So the combination of love and rewards seemed to work.

Reading Rogers (1967) contributed to my values. I was particularly influenced by his focus on unconditional regard.

> When the therapist is experiencing a warm, positive and acceptant attitude toward what is in the client, this facilitates change.

> (Rogers:1967:62)

So although my techniques were behaviourist, Roger's views were key to my relationships with the children.

A Damascan moment

In the late eighties I was appointed head of the school's training department. Our courses related to special educational needs and educational consultancy. Additionally I supported teachers who had problems with disturbed pupils. It was during this time that I became aware of how judgemental I was about my colleagues. I blamed them for not 'liking' disturbed children. I found it difficult to advise them. Eventually I recognised that my attitude to the teachers was similar to their view of disturbed children, it was an epiphany with regard to my work. As I wrote several years later for KARN (Kingston Action Research Network)

> My fundamental problem was a conflict between my commitment to the teachers I was supporting and a feeling of responsibility for my pupils. It took several more years before I realised that in order to meet the needs of these pupils I needed to work successfully with these teachers, indeed I needed to offer these adults the 'unconditional regard' that I offered my pupils.

I began to work on adopting a more positive view of my colleagues. I often quoted John Donne, as my inspiration, connecting it with unconditional regard.

> No man is an island, entire of itself; … Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bells tolls; it tolls for thee.
>
> (John Donne:1988:1-3)

This sounds smug, like I had found a solution and thence engaged beatifically with my clients. This was not my experience. Much of the time I felt scared and frightened.

Although I have referred only briefly to this struggle, offering unconditional regard is still important to me. I feel that somehow it is at the heart of any success, and missing when I fail. I wonder, given the complex responsive processes view of interdependence, how I make sense of my 'commitment' to offering unconditional regard and its' importance to my work.

Academia

What about the student?

During this period I successfully completed a Masters in Psychology of Learning. The course took place in a very prestigious university. It was a dreadful course, badly taught by tutors who were patronising and out of date. By the end of the course only four, of the original sixteen students, successfully completed the course. I described it as a course with, 'Noddy lectures and a PhD exam'.

One of the main impacts of this experience was on my work and values. I promised myself that my post-graduate courses would be different. I would strive to have all students successfully complete the qualifications **and** enjoy the course. Naturally I was not always successful; nevertheless most of my students graduated and many showed me respect and affection. Students commented on my passion for the subjects, they said that this was important. Even now I still feel angry that the academics that taught us were uninspiring and seemed indifferent to the students.

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During my final years at Whitefield I ran a Masters programme validated by Cranfield in Educational Consultancy. We focussed on the process model of Consultancy, using the work of Gallesich (1982), who proposed a process model. Hence a consultant's job was to facilitate client's learning, not provide solutions, but help them find their own. It was a very non-directive approach. Paradoxically the way I taught was relatively didactic, although my values continued to be affected by the work of Rogers. However I saw them as necessary, not sufficient.

> **Table 4** the degree of empathic understanding of the client manifested by the counsellor; b) the degree of positive affective attitude (unconditional positive regard)…c) the extent to which the counsellor is genuine, his words matching his own internal feeling
>
> (Rogers:1969:48)

Even then I disagreed with Rogers' view that people have all the resources to find there own answers, I believed that, at times, people need clearer directions and advise. At present I am struggling to make sense of emerging patterns in conversations with clients. My interventions can seem directive and purposeful, but what is really happening in these conversations. How can I have an intention if we co-create our conversation? What can I promise a client?

Becoming an Academic

In 1991 I started working at Kingston University. I was confronted by action research. This was the first time that I had seriously considered an alternative to quantitive research. In fact I had been very scathing of qualitative research. Throughout previous degrees the empirical approach was sine qua non.

At Kingston I met two people who influenced my life profoundly, Jack Whitehead (Bath University) and Pam Lomax (Professor of Research at Kingston). Between them I had a sense of being battered into taking an interest in action research. I wrote a story about the World Action Research Congress. Later I discussed the paper with colleagues, taping the conversation. What follows is a reflection on this conversation, written in my research journal in 1997.

Pam believed that my experience in Bath (attending the World Congress in Action Research) started my move away from traditional research to Action Research.

It was interesting to pick up on my view of the other (attendees at the conference) as being "more and less" (more interesting, less intimidating), than I had expected them to be. This was the first time that I had been able to entertain the notion of a contradiction, or even a paradox, in research.

The conference was a strange experience. Initially, I excluded myself. I did not belong. I was scared. I believed that the qualitative approach was for people who couldn't do proper research. These action researchers with their passion and intellect impressed me. Until then I had perceived qualitative researchers as sloppy writers of 'aga sagas'.

On reflection I think that it was the emerging relationships, rather than any intellectual challenge, that impacted my willingness to reconsider my thinking. The quality of the 'talk' was much richer than previous conference conversations. I was moved by Whitehead's view of action research.

Creating our living educational theory as an explanation of our own learning as we ask, research and answer questions of the kind, 'How do I improve my professional practice?'

(Whitehead:1989:41)

Until then I had seen no reason for researching. I enjoyed academic teaching. Why would I need to research? On the whole I had a high level of success, regularly evaluated my courses why research. Jack persuaded me that I could contribute to the educational community by creating 'living educational theory', (ibid) through researching my own professional practice. Of course I also saw the occasions when I did not do well. I talked to students about how I worked and they told me how scary I could be, especially when anyone made 'negative' remarks about disturbed children. I learned, from watching videos of myself, how I flushed and tightened my jaw when I was angry. It was a useful lesson and something of which I continue to be aware. The whole experience produced a methodological shift to research, which became fun and fascinating for the first time. I supervised Masters students engaged in action research; I adopted some of the methods. Interestingly I could see how to 'practise'

action research but was still adrift theoretically. Despite Jack's encouragement I did not publish; I lacked theoretical engagement.

Buber, (1937) was very influential to my professional practice, he believed that most conversations, and hence relationships, occur as an I-it relationship, i.e. we treat the other as an 'object', not a person. He believed that on occasion an 'I-You' relationship occurs, this was perceived as true interaction between people, where both people become aware of each other as a being like themselves. This helped me understand how I wanted to relate to students.

On reflection I can see that I had implicitly distinguished between my professional practice (teaching students) and my research (a nice to have, which led to interesting conversations). I did not take any of the literature seriously, unless it impacted my practice – teaching. I could not see how research would improve my work. I read to help my teaching, some of which included supervising action researchers, my 'research' was flawed, as neither embedded in the appropriate literature, nor published for scrutiny. My research stopped when I left acadaemia.

An Interlude

As I was leaving acadaemia I became involved with Landmark Education. They ran programmes, where they proffered a 'new interpretation of human being'. I explored my life and 'being' from this new perspective. Based on the assumption that life is only interpretation, not truth, we were encouraged to choose powerful interpretations about our experiences. This was a profoundly transformative experience. One of the main tenets of the programme was that we can always act, 'as if' we have a choice. It gave me a huge sense of freedom. I engaged extensively with courses, received coaching about every area of my life, and coached on their leadership programme. I assisted, voluntarily, with many of their courses. By the end of this process I was clear that I could interpret my life from the stance of having chosen it.

While working as a volunteer for Landmark I had really enjoyed the coaching. As a teenager I had read Marlowe's Doctor Faustus and was shocked by Faust's poor deal, some minor rewards for eternal damnation. This informed my coaching; I wanted my clients to have a

'great' life. I have continued to be influenced by this view and was particularly affected by Orlick (1980), Covey (1992) and Gallwey (2000). Their view of coaching assumes that people consistently underestimate their potential and a coach should help clients unleash their potential. This is still a prevailing view in competitive sport and has been brought into business by writers such as Gallwey (2000) and Buzan (2001). After completing with this organisation my life looked very different, I set up a business with my partner.

A New business

My partner, Martin, and I set up Arturo Consulting in 1998. Over the next couple of years I did a variety of different projects; Customer Relationship Management (CRM), communications consulting and coaching. Eventually I started to work with senior people, focussing on 'leadership'. The notion of leadership is problematic, and part of my work is to help people reflect on what they mean by this. Some of my work is training, sometimes I work in less 'structured' ways; conversing about leadership, 'shadowing' people at work and discussing their experiences. At times I coach executives on their life and leadership. So what is it that I do? The common thread is developing leadership through conversation. I am invited to work with teams and individuals to 'improve their leadership'.

I am particularly interested in power, and what it means when working with senior people. Clients have commented, 'you are the MD's coach and he behaves differently when you are around'. I am perceived as powerful. This is paradoxical given that my clients hire and fire me. I seem to have power despite my precarious position.

So what do we mean by power and how does this relate to leadership? This is key to my professional practice and drives my research interest. The traditional view of power is summarised by Elias.

> The mythology dictated by linguistic usage urges us to believe that there must be 'someone' who 'has power'. So because we feel the pressure of 'power,' we always invent a person who exercises it…
>
> (Elias:1970:94)

Many of my clients equate leadership with line management and refer to managers as having the power.

Power is central to all conversations and relationships.

> Power frightens us because it makes us realize that there are situations in which we can be forced to do something. It also fascinates and seduces us because of the possibility of being in the opposite position, telling others what to do and in many cases forcing them to do it…..
>
> (Griffin:2002:199-200)

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Given the emergent nature of intention and strategy in organisations I have started to wonder how, if at all, these senior executives have more power than the people that they manage? If everything is emergent and occurs as a result of local incidents in what way do these senior people 'lead'? How do they have any more power than their employees?

> The number of colleagues the CEO interacts with may well be larger than those the clerk interacts with, but both are limited and in that sense both are local. The power ratio is tilted substantially toward the CEO and away from the clerk so that the actions of the CEO may evoke responses from very large numbers of people while the actions of the clerk are attended to by only a few.
>
> (Stacey:2005:28)

So how is the CEO powerful? Stacey claims that his/her responses are from a larger number of people, but maybe the clerk produces more profound or immediate responses, the power ratio depends on need. When a process went wrong recently (a client organisation briefly misplaced £999,000,000), the processor retrieved the money. Once this had been done the senior executives discussed with the processor what had happened in order to find a way of avoiding the event in the future. The power balance evolved depending on need, power is consistently shifting. This is a theme key to my future research.

At present I am unclear what I do when working with clients. Am I a coach, a consultant, a teacher or am I an amalgam of all three? How can I make promises given the emergent nature of conversation? In pursuing my research I intend to enquire into these questions.

A Platonic dialogue?

When working in groups I used to view my group conversations as somewhat Socratic in nature. When reading Plato (1956) I am struck by Socrates' 'search for the truth'. In the 'dénouement' Socrates already knows the answers. This is how I have experienced many of my group sessions; part of me is open to an emerging conversation whilst paradoxically wanting to retain control. Of course this sense of control is a fantasy if conversation is co-created.

When working in a one-to-one situation, I have described myself as a coach, however I have become increasingly unhappy with this title. Coaching is equated with a humanistic, Rogerian model, which implies that I help people elucidate the answers, and determine their issues. Whilst I do this I also advise, refer them to relevant literature, challenge assumptions, consider frames of reference and make technical suggestions. My approach has been affected by many paradigms and is sometimes quite directive. One of the major compliments (from clients) and criticisms (from colleagues) is that my coaching can seem like teaching at times. Studying for the doctorate, will further my understanding of my professional practice. My understanding is already being enriched in writing this project. It has given me the opportunity to more rigorously examine my work within the context of complex responsive processes.

Groups and individuals

Whilst on the first residential course a faculty member said that working with individuals did not make a difference, and emphasised the importance of group work. I was deeply upset by this comment. That night I dreamed of the stables where I keep my horse. Somebody was cutting off one foot from each horse. I was frightened and went to fetch the owner of the yard, who seemed unconcerned. On reflection the dream seemed to reflect my sense of having something about which I was passionate (my work) damaged, and for it to be seen to as unimportant. Whenever I engage with the work around the doctorate I have very vivid dreams, hence the title of this project.

Later I spoke to Ralph (Stacey), he talked about the group being 'in the room' during the conversation.

> Essentially, the individual is understood to be social to the core because the processes of mind are the same as social processes. Both are processes of communicative interacting and power relating between human bodies in which individual minds form and are formed at the same time. Individual mind is the actions of a body directed towards itself while social is the action of bodies directed towards each other in paradoxical processes of continuity and potential transformation at the same time.
>
> (Stacy:2003a:17)

Transformative experiences occur when working with both groups and individuals. When talking to individuals about their colleagues, we are talking to the 'individuals within the team', so it can be seen that coaching is self-evidently social, and cannot be separated from other kinds of groups.

> Such ways of talking can bring to prominence previously unnoticed features of our relations to each other and to our surrounding circumstances, and in this way, lead to the institution of new 'forms of life (to use Wittgenstein's term), new ways in which people routinely relate themselves to one another.
>
> (Shotter:1994:1)

I prefer to work with groups of people who interact closely together as I believe that in working within a project together the group/team talk to each other in a different way. I will demonstrate this in the next narrative.

The Living Present

A passion for banking

This narrative describes a recent project with a large retail bank (Loyalty). The project related to leadership and was funded as a result of a research project indicating that their 'leadership'

was perceived as aggressive, rather than constructive. I worked with a Managing Director who had felt an immediate resonance with this perspective. He wanted to bring in "someone practical who could make a real difference to the leadership behaviours of my managers."

The whole process of 'selling the leadership project' was protracted, lasting seven months and costing me money and time. During this period I had a huge house fire, for which I felt responsible, in which my cat, Persephone, died. This was one of the most dreadful experiences of my life, and in between the clearing up and grieving I was trying to sell to Loyalty. My contact in Loyalty was unreliable, often late and cancelling meetings. In the midst of my grief and upset I became increasingly irritated. Finally I decided that I was completely fed up with the whole process and would make one final meeting. It was decision time. I was very angry.

I entered the meeting expecting a no. I told the executive team that I would run the project on three conditions: -
1. There should be both group and individual work.
2. I would only work with whole teams.
3. They should choose people who were at least committed to some change.
Within minutes they agreed.

The project dominated my work for two years and was viewed as highly successful by the client. The participants engaged with the conversations, involved their departments and generally talked of it as a positive and practical experience.
For the first project I worked with some of the more 'cynical' senior bankers. On the first day I asked them how long they had worked at Loyalty, ' twenty three years, thirty years, twenty years, only fifteen years'. I was astonished. They consistently talked about how they couldn't wait to take early retirement. I noticed I became increasingly angry with and for them. I realised this related to an earlier experience. I saw a resonance with my father and his life and death.

When I was 21 my father died of a heart attack. He was 56, and hated his job. I remember feeling bitter at all the things he would miss, my marriage, his grandchildren and finally being able to retire. He, like them, could not wait to retire. I told them about this experience and

explained how I feel driven to support people in getting the lives they want or wanting the life they have got. We talked about how life is precious.

Don looked ancient, (he was 47). He was very unhappy at work. He was in dispute about his grading, his boss thought his new job (the result of 'downsizing') should be down graded. He wanted either promotion, or at least to keep his existing level until he could get redundancy (three years), but his status was only secure for two. I tried to persuade him to discuss his issue with his boss, but he refused. Finally we had a session in which we discussed the death of his two children (events of which I was aware, but had not discussed). He described their deaths. I asked him 'What did you make that mean?' He said 'I am a crap dad'. I asked him if this were true and he said, 'No'. After that session he went to a senior manager and struck a deal that he would keep his status until he left. I believe that this conversation offered him an opportunity to confront something that he had been denying and deal with other aspects of his life. At the time I was unsure what had shifted. He was much calmer and happier after he had agreed his deal. I now relate this to Stacey's discussion of bringing shadow themes to the fore as a way of helping narratives become free flowing (Stacey, 2003)

We had an 'evaluation' meeting at the end of this project. Participants were very complimentary about my impact on them. They talked about the experience in such a way that one of the observers said 'it was as if they had been sprinkled by magic dust'. I was particularly moved when one of them said, "no, we are the magic dust". From him this was an astonishing remark. As one of the other attendees said, "It was amazing to hear their (the participants') feedback, they're not exactly wufty-tufty guys, I wouldn't have expected them to talk like that". It was agreed that another project should be funded.

I remember feeling scared and anxious, what was this 'magic', could I do it again, what would that mean? It seemed ephemeral. I wanted to know what I had done to be so successful.

Choice and responsibility

The next narrative describes my experience with a service centre, (PSC) within Loyalty. The programme comprised a number of one-to one coaching sessions (between six and twelve) and six group sessions.

I believe that conversations in both a dyadic and group setting provide the most powerful context for transformative experiences; individuals cannot be separated from their relationships.

> Complex responsive processes theory, however, does not distinguish the individual and the social as separate levels but regards them as the same phenomenon. Human minds and human societies arise together, with the individual as the singular and the social as the plural of interdependent embodied persons. Mind is understood as social processes and the individual is thought of as social through and through (Foulkes, 1964; Stacey, 2003). Individuals are paradoxically forming and being formed at the same time.
>
> (Stacey & Griffin:2005:22)

I asked Rob, a participant, how he had felt about the project. He said:

> The first session was challenging and didn't go as expected. We had a low expectation…the team was disparate…our expectations were low… but very quickly the whole thing turned round, the material was quality and I appreciated your ability to cut through the ****… It was a steep slope climbing pretty quickly. We touched on both personal and professional issues and I talked about things I had never talked about before".

Throughout the six-month project, I visited the team on a regular basis, working with them both as a large group and individually. I introduced them to ideas about different aspects of leadership; we discussed issues facing the business, shadow themes started to emerge. The one-to-ones were wide-ranging, covering both personal and professional issues.

At present I am struggling with making sense of teaching as complex responsive processes of relating. Both teaching and coaching make certain promises. There are supposedly agreed objectives, how can I as teacher/coach promise anything to a client, who has certain goals/aims in mind. Can I suggest that we can have an interesting conversation that will help 'unstick' their conversations and move their shadow themes to legitimate themes'? Would that mean I would be back in the insider/observer contradiction or would I be a participant 'inside' the interaction?

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I had suggested that in addition to having coaching sessions with me, they also coached each other. They chose partners and conversation flourished. As Rob said, "Once I started co-coaching with, Ann, a door was opened to a whole new thing." So could it be that bringing in an outsider, coach or consultant, helped new patterns emerge?

> Secondly that which is organising itself is not the separate individual... It is the overall pattern of relationships that is organising itself at the same time as the nature of the agents is changing. The agents are formed and being formed by the overall pattern of the relationships.
>
> (Stacey:2003:333)

Within the team lack of communication was an emerging shadow theme. Despite the perceived 'aggression' of these managers, they still found it difficult to be direct with colleagues. There were two approaches to conflict; people losing their temper, or moaning, either to others or within their silent conversation. We discussed being more direct and assertive, not aggressive. People began to tell the people concerned, rather than talk about them.

For example, Ann was convinced that her boss, Jim, did not listen to her. She felt that he cut across her in meetings, and was disrespectful. We discussed this on several occasions I suggested that she talked to him but she refused. Finally, in a group session, the team talked about their experience of working with Ann, praising her commitment and support. When Ann and I discussed this, later, she could remember everyone's comments but Jim's, which had been very positive. I pointed this out to her and she agreed that she needed to talk to him. In the next session she said that felt much happier after talking to Jim. He was pleased that she had told him, as he had been oblivious to her view of their relationship. Months later, at the completion of the project, she said she still felt and behaved differently.

By the end of the project the team was working much more closely together, and deemed the experience highly successful. They believed that working on the project had helped them both in their professional and personal lives. They liked the focus on choices. Participants felt this approach gave them freedom and confidence, as Rob said later, "The importance of

understanding that I could affect things, I thought a lot about my ability to make choices and decided that, if I pursue this approach, it can work".

So why pay me?

When I first read the series on Complexity and Emergence in Organisations, I asked myself, 'so what am I doing, what is the point of being a management consultant?' Early in her book Shaw talks about people and how they can influence.

> I am paying attention to the way influence arise in webs of relationships in particular contexts and that it is the process of relating itself that I am attending to. It may look as though this gathering seems to depend on identifying certain named individuals. But these individuals have significance in the context of their ongoing relationships. They are not important because of some intrinsic capacity that can be separated from the communicative interaction in which that significance arises, even though they may indeed be developing particular capabilities through their history of relating. So I am not just identifying informal influencers but participating in the process by which leadership emerges.
>
> (Shaw:2002:38)

I read prior to starting the doctorate and scribbled next to it 'Where does that leave me?' I remember feeling depressed, much of my consultancy work generated agreed objectives. However when I started to look at what I actually did, it occurred to me that I frequently ignored these objectives. When talking to clients it seemed that conversations flowed, I would pick up on something that 'felt' important, and we would discuss a response. The objectives exercise was done to assuage some guilt and make me feel like a proper consultant. I don't believe human beings develop in a structured and pre-determined way. Change is messier and more uncertain. My coaching, or conversations, with clients seem to happen. Whilst they are purposeful, they are not planned.

While writing this project I have reread Shaw's work. I have become conscious of similarities in our professional practice. In the past I have described myself as very didactic and intentional. In practice, I am more willing to follow and interject, I knew I was not a classic

facilitator nor did I imagine that I could dictate outcomes. Listening, whether in groups or with individuals, is a crucial part of what I do.

My emphasis on teaching and coaching to objectives partly grew out of a need to be seen as a 'real consultant' and partly as a response to client expectations. I knew I had an impact with clients, but not how to describe or explain it. One of the reasons I am doing this doctorate is to make sense of my professional practice. I have been challenged by complex responsive processes thinking, in particular how can I claim that I help make a difference, **in line with an agreed stance?**

This has led to my struggle with, what is meant by intention. While I would argue that I do not work with clear objectives, I do have some intentions. In the previous narrative my intention was to help the participants look at and change their own behaviour, moving away from a fairly aggressive stance to a more constructive style of leadership.

> Intentions are forming all the time, not as fully completed plans of campaign but as movements into the way things seem to be shaping up. Intentions, others, and mine are forming and evolving responsively, I am "feeling my way forward' in a web of shifting circumstances that I am participating in creating- as I suggest we all do all the time.

(Shaw:2002:62)

So what is it that I am doing? Can I make promises?

Leading to a research question; emerging themes

Since writing this paper certain themes have emerged, which I will pursue through my research.

The first theme relates to my discomfort with agreeing outcomes with clients. How can I make promises about 'improving their leadership' when I am uncertain about what outcomes may emerge? Given the importance of developing authentic and honest working relationships with my clients, I am concerned there is a lack of integrity in promising particular outcomes.

Underpinning this is my continuing questioning of what my professional practice involves. I often feel like a fraud. What is this 'magic dust'? I have a sense of something ephemeral that I am doing, but don't understand, and am often scared that I will not be able to replicate it. What is it that I am doing.

How do I offer my clients unconditional regard and does it matter? I am clear that there is a strong ethical base to my work. Throughout this narrative I talk about my passion to 'make a difference': Debbie must learn to read; I should do everything ethically possible to help my students succeed; my strong sense that the guys at Loyalty should have the life that they wanted. This inspires me. Underpinning my work is a strong sense that in order to help my clients I need to offer unconditional regard. Recently when reading Gergen I was drawn to his discussion of what he calls the 'love ethic'.

> There are more promising possibilities. For example, African American scholar Cornell West emphasises the importance of developing a love ethic, within the black community in this case, which can enable people to work together in a context of heightened self-esteem. Such an ethic might eventually enable better relationships generally.
>
> (Gergen:1999:46)

Throughout my recent work there is a shadow theme regarding leadership and power, these are concepts that I have discussed with clients and now realise are far more problematic than I had perceived.

Conclusion: Full circle

Clearly I am still left with many questions about my professional practice and complex responsive processes thinking. Rather like at the end of my philosophy degree I feel that I know little, but have many questions.

Several themes have emerged in the process of writing this paper. These include how can I work successfully with clients; how can we 'agree on outcomes', with any degree of authenticity, in an emerging patterns of relationships. How realistic is my focus on the importance of unconditional regard? Finally like a 'ghost in the machine', there is a question

about leadership and power. It seems that my future research will focus on whether I should make promises to clients, given my developing view of the emergent nature of patterns of interaction.

Reflections on Project One

In this first project I reflected upon my biography, discussing my education and career. I had recently been introduced to complex responsive processes thinking and was intrigued but uncertain about how it may impact my professional practice. I was so anxious that I talked about 'burying my practice in the cellar', during the first residential. I lacked confidence regarding the implications of literature, and was worried that this may affect my competence. By engaging deeply with the literature I have understood and developed how I work, which no longer feels so hidden or magical. This is not a true completion, rather it is driven by the production of a thesis; I will undoubtedly continue to make sense of my practice.

The notion of emergence was particularly troubling, I describe a sense of anomie, at the time I perceived emergence as equivalent to chaos and had not made the connection with the interdependence of people. Throughout I was troubled by the notion of emergence within the context of consultancy. In particular I struggled with how I could make promises to clients, in line with an agreed stance, assuming that conversation are co-created. I kept returning to the notion of power and leadership and was particularly exercised by the idea of power 'owned' by senior people. I also referred to my introduction to qualitative research and how I had found it exciting and yet not acted on my sense of excitement, it has been in going through this doctoral process that I have finally found the opportunity to research my professional practice and study research methodology.

It has been interesting to notice, throughout this project, my ambivalence about my work, I ask 'what is that I am doing?' I also am unclear how to name my professional practice, am I a coach, a teacher, a management consultant. Through the social iterative nature of the research method I have found a way of responding to these questions. As I discuss in the synopsis it was a challenge from my external examiner during my progression viva, then discussed with my learning group, that led to my focus on identity formation in management consultancy. It has only been in the reflections on my inquiry in the final writing of this thesis that I recognised that identity formation was already an issue for me in Project One. By engaging reflexively with this project, I have realised that I was unsure about management consultancy, and what it meant, despite designing and tutoring on an MSc in educational consultancy. On

reflection I realise that the consultancy model that I had espoused was not in line with my professional practice, hence it was not surprising that I felt a fraud.

I concluded Project One with a discussion about my anxiety regarding contracting conversations with clients; in particular I was trying to make sense of the implications of emergence for contracting objectives. Through engaging with the work of Elias (1970) and Mead (1934 I have become more at ease with letting contracting conversations evolve. I no longer see my early explorations with clients about projects, as making promises. It is also interesting that there are   there are reflections on the role of power in consultant-client relationships, and this relates to need or dependence.

In the next project I engage with the work of Joas (1996) with reference to intention as an emergent, embodied and social concept. I challenge the prevailing interpretation of intention as an precursor to action, located in an individual. Using narrative inquiries related to organisational incidents, I elucidate intentions as a theme organising conversations, in particular evolving in relation to inclusion and exclusion, (Elias & Scotson, 1965)

Project Two

Emergent Intentions in Leadership Consultancy

Introduction

This project explores the phenomenon of intention within the framework of my work as a leadership consultant. While the work is ongoing, the narrative is episodic. My purpose in writing is to research my professional practice as complex responsive processes of relating. My main focus is to investigate how intentions are emergent, social and co-created in interaction; rather than private, individual and pre-planned as a precursor to action. In other words, in my research, I am exploring the shift in my view of intention as a personal act that drives individual behaviour, to a social act that evolves within interaction, wherein it is simultaneously formed and being formed; a move from the notion of intention as an aim, to intention as a 'theme organising conversation' (Stacey 2003).

In writing this narrative I make sense of the way in which my work informs my thinking. I also consider how my professional practice and reflections thereon, are being affected by pertinent literature, in particular the work of Elias (1965), (1970), Shaw (2002), Stacey (2003), Mead (1934) and Joas (1996), (2000). In reading these authors, my view of intention has been challenged, and a new interpretation has emerged. This sounds like a seamless, non-problematic experience; rather it has been messy, challenging and fascinating. I also discuss some of the issues that have arisen from this shift in my thinking and consider the implications for my professional practice.

The experience of writing makes sense of the living present (Griffin, 2002) moment-by-moment, thereby offering me the opportunity to document the interaction between my practice, theoretical explorations and research methodology, Hardy & Clegg (1997), Cunliffe (2003), Stacey & Griffin (2005). By investigating my practice, within an appropriate theoretical context, I intend to improve and elucidate my work, while contributing to professional and theoretical knowledge.

Finally I consider briefly how my inquiry is emerging; and the theoretical challenges, which continue to puzzle and interest me.

Why this inquiry?

In Project One I have described issues that consistently exercised my thinking, in particular my experience when I first read the Complexity and Emergence in Organizations Series. I remembered feeling both excited and scared when considering the implications for my professional practice. Initially I was concerned that this notion of the emergent nature of conversation 'indicated' that any talk was outside my (or anyone else's) control and wondered what this meant for me as a consultant. I was struggling with the notion of emergence,

> Emergence means that pattern arises in the complete absence of any plan, blueprint or programme for that pattern

> (Stacey:2005:13)

Stacey is elucidating how patterns arise locally as a function of the interaction of individuals or actors, highlighting how the emerging patterns are a consequence of the biographies of the individuals, groups and organisations involved.

Initially it struck me as a rather deterministic view of human interaction. However, despite my fears, there was something arresting about these ideas, which were commensurate with my experience. Some of my concerns arose when I considered conversations with potential clients; often we talk about our intentions for the project in terms of desired outcomes. These outcomes are assumed to provide a basis whereby we will eventually 'evaluate' the work. On reflection I was also challenged by what complex responsive processes thinking would imply for planning my work. As I engaged further, I started to realise how I had assumed a 'rationalist view' of the world. In other words, as an autonomous human being I can determine a goal and act to achieve this goal; as will be discussed later, this falls within the notion of intention as a private, individual act with thought occurring before action.

Despite some concerns with this position, I had continued with this modus operandi for some years. As I reread Stacey (2003) and Shaw (2002), I started to reconsider ways of describing

my work; I became increasingly aware that their descriptions of professional practice were more in line with my, at times, messy and uncertain experiences of engaging with clients.

In my research proposal, I asked 'how can I make promises, to clients, given my developing views of human interaction?' What has emerged in the reflection and writing of this project, is an awareness that my professional practice has not been in line with some of my espoused assumptions. I have started to reconsider what I mean by 'having intentions' in my practice, and what this implies. Part of my challenge, in writing this project, is to clarify for myself what is meant by intention. The following narrative helps to explicate my evolving understanding.

The Context for the narrative

The narrative explores a piece of work I have been doing with a large Scottish Financial Services Organisation (CS). Rick, the new Managing Director, had recommended me to a fellow director (Bessie) who had expressed concern about one of her senior executives (Sally). Rick called me to give some background on Sally, who had applied unsuccessfully, to be Bessie's deputy. He told me, "Sally hasn't got what it takes to move to functional director level, but we need her in the organisation because of her technical skills". He asked if I would talk to her.

Despite some reservations about working with individuals, rather than teams, which I will discuss later, I agreed to meet her. Rick was a good contact, from whom I was hoping to get further work. My ambivalence about the project continued and it was only later, in a meeting with Bessie that I became committed to working with Sally. Writing about this meeting, (described later in this narrative), was seminal to my developing sense of intention as emergent.

Contradiction or paradox?

As mentioned, I had been initially disturbed by the notion of human interaction as an **emergent** phenomenon; in particular with regard to intentions. Reading Shaw (2002) had a

profound impact on me. Whilst her descriptions of conversation resonated with my own experience, I resisted her conclusions. I was fearful, (as I discuss later), of the extreme implications for my practice. When I read Shaw (2002) in 2003 I was struck by a sense of anomie.

So you are shifting from one kind of rationale to another … Yes from a thought before action, design before implementation, systematic, instrumental logic of organising, towards a paradoxical kind of logic in which we see ourselves as participating in the self-organising emergence of meaningful activity from within our disorderly open-ended responsiveness to one another.

(Shaw:2002:30)

I wrote in Shaw's (2002) book, 'if leadership is emergent what is my role?' I felt stricken by a sense that once I really engaged with this work; I would change fundamentally, yet I was excited by the descriptions of her work. It did not 'feel' completely dissimilar to my own practice. The notion of continuous sense making in conversation resonated with my experience. Shaw's (2002) description of this shift of rationale reflected how I experienced contracting conversations. I realised how *unreflectively* I wrote proposals including agreed intentions (in the aim and design sense of the word), whilst not really believing in the possibility of such 'predictions'. I felt a sense of shame, a feeling that I had acted without integrity. As Aram (2004) points out,

shame is the individually, the self-felt experience of the dynamics of exclusion and inclusion as group process and as the silent conversation of mind, all at the same time. This means, therefore, that in addition to involving one's sense of self-worth and adequacy, the process of shame is also a paradoxical process.

(Aram:2004:237)

Later I will explore how my sense of shame, and experience of inclusion and exclusion, were closely related to my understanding of intentions as emergent.

My research question arose from a need to make sense of intentions in a way that aligned with my experience, discussing outcomes with clients, if conversation was emergent and co-

created. How could I agree intentions when I was 'just another agent involved in an emerging interaction'? What did that mean when planning new projects with clients? This has led to a reappraisal of what I understand by intentions.

> Although we may each be developing political intentions, consciously making bids to influence the course of events, shifts in power figurations occur spontaneously and unpredictably beyond the control of any one party or group, as is the nature of all self-organising processes.
>
> (Shaw:2002:73-74)

So how am I to make sense of the notion of intention as emergent?

The Chambers Dictionary defines intention as a 'design, aim, purpose'. This brief description indicates the levels of ambiguity with regard to how the word is used. Common parlance suggests that intentions relate to a plan for some kind of result in the future; there seems to be a clear link with outcomes. In turning to the literature for clearer distinctions, several seem to throw some light on the way that the terms are perceived. There seems to be a common view of intention as private, individual, pre-planned and results based. Before investigating this further I will continue my narrative about working at CS.

My First Meeting with Sally: A Project Explored

Sally is a senior executive in the bank, who worked in Bessie's team. Bessie had created a new deputy role that Sally had failed to obtain, (this meant Sally would no longer report to Bessie). When we met she was still reporting directly to Bessie as no deputy had been appointed; four months had elapsed since she had been turned down for the job.

We met in Scotland; I had flown up for the day and was feeling both nervous and excited. I was very conscious of conflicting needs and how much I wanted this project to be successful. My partner and I had done little work over the previous year, so we were very concerned about money. I hoped that I would 'get on' with Sally. I choose to work with clients where I believe that we can make progress. On occasion I have had a sense of being 'stuck' in conversations with someone. The same themes recur; I have a feeling of repetition and

staleness. I decided if I felt like this about Sally I would refuse the work, despite our financial straits.

On first meeting, I found Sally quite daunting; she seemed dour and difficult, only becoming animated when complaining. She was obviously very angry about her situation repeating, several times 'Bessie still hasn't told me why I didn't get the job'. She had only received feedback from Rick regarding her 'failure', nothing from Bessie and she was very angry with Bessie. Rick had told Sally that she did not have a 'strategic view of the organisation' and that 'she lacked presence'. She disagreed, telling me that she did have a strategic view of the organisation. She believed that what he viewed as her lack of presence was shyness, and said that she was unclear how this was relevant to the promotion. We sat in a tiny room and I wondered how I could work with this woman.

At the time she seemed stuck in a conversation about her failure, and her boss. She did not want to explore what she could learn from her experience, so when I asked her 'why do you think you may not have got the job' she kept repeating, 'I don't know and Bessie hasn't told me'. I was not sure why she wanted to work with me. I explained to Sally that I did not see it as my job to 'make her better', or to 'fix her problems'. I suggested that we could work together and see whether she found this useful.

I told her that I preferred that we spend time together within her daily interactions, as well as having individual conversations. I explained that it would be important to meet her team and contribute to other groups that she deemed significant. I also elucidated the importance of our developing a successful working relationship and said that, if I did not feel that we were making progress, I would discuss this with her, leaving the project if we seemed to be 'stuck'. As I left I felt ambivalent, Sally seemed trapped in a conversational loop regarding her boss and her failure to be promoted. I was concerned about how we would work together.

Emergent intentions and groups

My professional practice has usually involved me in working with both individuals and groups and, although I had not really considered my reasoning for this, I had a strong sense that it was important. It seemed that new and more free-flowing conversations arose from

working with both the individual and the group/s with whom the individual interacted regularly.

> The behaviour of an individual can be understood only in terms of the behaviour of the whole social group of which he is a member, since his individual acts are involved in larger, social acts which go beyond himself and which implicate the other members of that group.

(Mead 1934: 7)

Mead (1934) is pointing to the fundamentally social nature of human beings. Communication occurs through symbols in a pattern of gesture and response; and in so doing identity is constantly shifting. It is important therefore to participate in the social context. This is more difficult to achieve when working with an individual, meeting them intermittently and rarely meeting significant others. The individual is inseparable from the group; learning to take the role of others in the group is essential for the development of self, and for cooperative action. I was an intermittent visitor and this was not an ideal situation, nevertheless one could argue that I met the group through her descriptions, and I had an opportunity to engage with them through our conversations.

Given my developing sense of intention as emergent it seemed important to participate in conversations with those significant others in Sally's world, thus participating in the ebb and flow of the patterning of conversation and the organising theme of intention within this context. I consoled myself with the thought that if Stacey (2003) is correct with his view of intention as an organising theme then throughout Sally's interactions with her colleagues, intentions would be patterning conversations in ways, which would emerge and pattern my conversations with her. In his discussion of social acts Stacey (2005) highlights how this could be conceptualised,

> In acting in the present, each individual is then taking up the attitude of a few specific others and at the same time the attitude of this generalised other, the attitude of the group, the organisation, the society. These wider, generalised attitudes are evolving historically and are always implicated in every human action… The generalised other is the taking of the attitude of all other participants.

(Stacey:2005:32)

Stacey (2005) points to the 'presence' of those others within our conversations despite their physical absence.

The Project Commences

Sally phoned a couple of days later to tell me that she had decided to work with me. When I asked why, she explained that Rick was instrumental, with Bessie, in her failed promotion, so she would go with his recommendation. We met in London and I spent time with her in a large meeting. Afterwards Sally and I sat in the lobby of her hotel talking about the meeting. I asked her why she did not engage more with people socially; I had noticed that even with people she knew she did not 'chat'. She didn't greet people, or talk to them at lunch. When I asked why she said 'I am a fussy eater'. I felt frustrated and uneasy as I walked towards London Bridge, wondering why I was paid as a leadership consultant, how did shyness relate leadership; reflecting on whether I was helping this client.

Our next meeting was at head office. We sat in a tiny room as Sally continued to complain about the promotion and Bessie's lack of 'formal feedback about her failure'. She was particularly incensed over Bessie's approach to her previous reviews. When she had been recruited Bessie had told her that she was being groomed to take over her job. Sally described all her reviews as 'highly positive' and told me that she had always been given good pay rises and bonuses. She could not understand why Bessie had never told her that 'things weren't on track for this promotion'. None of the leadership skills, mentioned by Rick, had been discussed. I remember feeling uncomfortable, wondering if I could help, a sense of unease with this repetitious conversation. I wonder now whether I was acting from an 'habitual orientation' (Joas, 1996) and was stuck in this conversation by a need to help.

Nevertheless I could understand her frustration. It was four months since she had failed to get promotion and she was still unclear about Bessie's reasons. Sally told me that her intention in working with me was, 'to gain my missing leadership skills' in particular those mentioned by Rick and, 'at the next opportunity, get promotion'. I was aware that these were her preferred outcomes. Although these themes re-I and at times were an organising theme in our conversations, it would be an over-simplification to suggest that this pre-determined seemingly private intention of Sally's somehow affected my 'design' of the project. Indeed

my experience of the project was that there was no clear plan. I would turn up and we would talk, sometimes we interacted with her team or other groups, our conversations evolved around local incidents. I remember feeling uneasy and rudderless, I wanted to know 'what we were working on', 'what did she want from me' and 'what would success be like?' I was still attached to a 'thought before action' view of intention.

Exploring the Meaning of Intention

Before continuing with this narrative, I would like to consider some of the philosophical and management explanations of intention, comparing them with my view of intentions as emergent.

Horvath, Marx and Kamann (1990) claim that intention has two distinct meanings, intention as a reason for doing something, and intention as a plan for how it should be done. In their discussion of intentions in counselling, they posit that both need to be present, 'in the counsellor's mind' in order for counselling to be successful. This is in line with some of the more philosophical views of intention, where there is a clear link between intention and intended outcome; intention is 'located within the individual'.

Adair (1998) suggests that leaders should clearly delineate their intentions.

> Remember that an objective is tangible, concrete, limited in time; an aim is less defined but is still fairly substantial rather than abstract; but a purpose may be couched in general or value terms… Perhaps the key for you to focus upon first is the ability to break down the general into the particular, Aristotle… taught Alexander the Great the simple lesson of how to take a general intention and turn it into a specific objective. That is why Alexander was able to conquer the known world.
>
> (Adair:1998:79)

Clearly Adair (1998) considers an intention to be a future plan. He locates it within the individual, and argues that for it to become an outcome, it needs to be specified as an objective.

Robins (1984) asks how intentions arise when he considers the relationship between intention and promises. He refers to Hume (1888) who, in his discussion about obligation, suggests that creating an obligation from our own will is ' a manifest absurdity to anybody who is not blinded by prejudice' p. 517. Robins (1984) claims that obligations are a function of intention, which he believes is a precursor to commitment.

> Intention is a commitment to act. … the commitment must be understood to be irreducibly normative (as opposed to causal). For the notion of intention makes a man stand to his own future actions (or omissions) in a special way: only in relation to a normative commitment can a man's *performance be mistaken…* as opposed to this being attributed to his *intention.*
>
> (Robins:1984:13)

Robins (1984) contextualises the act socially and much of his argument relates to the role of intention in obligations and promising, thus locating intention in a more normative tradition. He proposes that intention acts as part of a definition of other activities, distinguishing between first and second order intentions. He describes first order intention as a private decision to act, contrasting this with second order intention, which has an extra element, the intention 'not to change your mind'. Although he talks about social activities involving intention, such as marriage vows, which he considers second order, and viewed normatively, nevertheless he considers intention to be a private, individual act, related to an aim or a plan. He makes his position very clear in the following.

> My position makes private acts prior, normatively and conceptually, to social ones; the position does not allow any social act to create a binding sense of obligation unless the possibility of obligation is embedded in non-social intentional action.
>
> (Robins:1984:16)

Robins (1984) is clear that intentions arise privately not socially, a thought before action, thereby indicating his underpinning teleological assumption.

Dennett (1989) interprets intention differently, although still as a private act, intention forms part of his description of what it is to be human. His focus is to 'talk about the mind'. In his

discussion on beliefs he claims that only from a *predictive strategy* can beliefs be 'seen' to exist, in other words by observing behaviour. He explains as follows,

> To a first approximation, the intentional strategy consists of treating the object whose behaviour you want to predict as a rational agent with beliefs and desires and other mental stages exhibiting what Brentano called intentionality.
>
> (Dennett:1989:15)

It is obvious that Dennett (1989) holds a rationalist view of human beings, perceiving us as independent actors. He discusses what kind of 'system', (his words to describe a human being, not mine) can be considered capable of belief. He goes on to say, 'what it is to be a true believer is to be an intentional system' (ibid, p.16). He considers alternative ways of predicting behaviour, including; astrological, the 'physical stance', which call on the laws of physics, and the 'design stance'. All are deemed insufficient with regard to predicting behaviour, his alternative or contribution to the debate, is the notion of an intentional stance,

> First you decide to treat the object whose behaviour is to be predicted as a rational agent; then you figure out what beliefs that agent ought to have, given its' place in the work and its purpose. Then you figure out what desires it ought to have, on the same considerations, and finally you predict that this rational agent will act to further its goals in the light of its beliefs.
>
> (Dennett:1989:17)

So for Dennett (1989) intention allows for a stance, which he claims, 'yields an objective, real pattern in the world' (ibid p.34). Fundamentally therefore intention is formed within human beings and allows them to hold beliefs, therefore his notion of intention is fundamentally ultra-rational. It seems that for him intention has a quasi-functional status, allowing us to predict others' behaviour.

Given my growing sense of unease with this internalised pre-determined view of intention I do not support Dennett's (1989) argument; nevertheless I believe that both Robins (1994) and Dennett (1989) offer a philosophical discussion about intention that is more in line with my previous thinking; essentially a view of human beings as rational and independent. Both

Robins (1994) and Dennett (1989) postulate intention as a private aim; decided upon, before action, by autonomous actors.

Searle (1983) argues that intentionality is present when 'mental states are directed towards objects or events'; he suggests that intentionality does not require pre-determination but can happen in the moment, he names this 'intention-in-action. This seems a move towards intention as emergent within action. Although this is more in line with how I am beginning to conceptualise intention, his view is that intention is individual not social. Here we diverge.

In writing my narrative, which describes episodes over time and has been written and rewritten over time, intention has started to occur as something different to the results-focussed interpretation with which I started. A pattern of emerging intentions, co-created with my clients, is closer to my experience of the episodes described here. In writing and rewriting this project and in conversation with my learning set and supervisors, a new sense of what I mean by intention is evolving; iterations and re-iterations of my work have supported my research process.

When I first started writing about my experiences I talked about conflicting or changing intentions. From this perspective, the notion of evolving, shifting aims seemed to suggest that I could not 'fulfil my consultancy brief'. How could I promise a sponsor to help develop 'constructive leadership' when the project was part of a dance with participants unknown? In expressing my disquiet with the notion of emergent intentions, my focus was on intention as a planned aim, collapsing this with outcome. In writing these iterations I have started to notice the way in which emerging intentions 'organised' conversations with my client and sense how the ebb and flow of intentions patterned our conversations. Thus intention is not an aim belonging to an individual actor; rather it is a thematic patterning of interaction.

> Intention, then, emerges in the conversational life of a group of people. A single individual does not simply 'have' an intention. Rather the intention an individual expresses has emerged in the conversational interaction with others. Intention and choice are not lonely acts but themes organised by, and organising relationships at the same time.
>
> (Stacey:2003:352)

MacLean and MacIntosh (2005) develop the work of Joas (1996) in their connection between intention and action. They discuss how intention emerges within the dynamic of creative action. They highlight the difference between intention as a 'thought before action', predicated on the notion of human beings as rational and autonomous, and develop a view of intention as a dynamic concept, arising out of action; underpinned by the concept of human beings as interdependent, 'interactive' beings. I have found their work, and the work of Joas (1996) particularly illuminating and will explore this further with the context of this narrative.

So What Did Bessie Want?

After several meetings with Sally, I began to feel concerned that I had not met Bessie. Partly I was worried that, as the budget holder, I needed her to agree my pay and conditions, I also wished to get a sense of why she was employing me. I was surprised that Bessie had not requested a meeting, usually I meet my business sponsor prior to the project. There is often a conversation about intended outcomes and what they are hoping to achieve by employing me. Frequently people describe what they believe 'is missing in their leadership teams' and assume I will help the team 'develop these skills'. Whilst I have always told clients that I can make no promises, these conversations are always interesting. They can provide an opportunity for me to start making sense of how various groups are interacting. Throughout the conversations themes emerge which pattern the patterning of future discourse. In addition I wanted to hear Bessie's views on Sally and why she had not been promoted. Sally had asked me to request this feedback. She believed that Bessie was more likely to tell me than her; she proved to be correct.

I wanted to get a sense of what Bessie was like, for myself, I had only heard other peoples' opinions. I felt it was important to understand what she hoped for by hiring me to work with one of her team. At the time I wanted to understand 'Bessie's intentions'. What I find interesting now is to reflect upon what I believed were mine and to consider how they were emerging. I was unclear whether I wanted to work with Sally, as she seemed resistant to exploring her feelings or options. She tended to keep repeating how angry she was, and reiterating how upset she was with Bessie.

A Meeting with my sponsor; a sense of intentions emerging

Bessie and I met for lunch; she had invited another of her team (Steve), who was junior to Sally, who she introduced as her finance man. I felt rather surprised at his presence, but assumed he needed to be part of the discussion regarding my fees. As I walked into the room it felt cosy, food was laid out on the table, we exchanged jokes about what we liked to eat. Bessie was a smart woman and I remember feeling welcomed and 'included'. Bessie told me her reasons for not promoting Sally, saying that she 'did not have a business-wide approach'. She described Sally as 'unaware of others', with a 'closed' demeanour claiming that she 'harps on about a subject despite others' obvious disinterest'. She described her as, 'hiding behind files'; and mentioned that Sally did not always write or speak 'correctly'.

I was beginning to feel very embarrassed by her openness. I noticed that I was blushing and feeling physically uncomfortable. I felt discomfited by her criticism of Sally, especially given that I was a stranger, and Steve's presence. She told me many personal details about Sally, who has a gene that could precipitate a very serious illness; the illness becomes apparent only when the symptoms develop. These include difficulty in speaking clearly and other neurological impairments. Bessie also mentioned that Sally's brother had died unexpectedly, in his early thirties, as a result of this problem. This was when Sally had discovered her genetic inheritance. She finally mentioned that Sally used to be very fat, frumpy and single; and had only recently 'lost weight, got herself a partner and improved her clothes'. Each time I return to this passage I notice how angry I feel at this woman casually ripping someone to shreds, with mindlessness (Arendt, 1963) and unconcern.

During this conversation I started to feel very irate with Bessie, given that she had not shared her 'concerns' with Sally. She was so dismissive and rude about her and I felt defensive, eating very little and saying less. I noticed an emerging sense of loyalty to Sally; linked with an evolving intention to work with her. This meeting was seminal in my choosing to take the project, with the intention of helping Sally in whatever way that I could. Even now, as I write this, I feel very angry and upset that Bessie disclosed all this to me; and that I did nothing to stop her. I feel ashamed that my initial sense of 'cosiness, hospitality and welcome' impressed me. I feel embarrassed that I was relieved that this was not going to be a 'hard-sell', but an

intimate chat with this powerful woman. I felt conflicted by a sense of wanting to be part of the club, and yet upset that Bessie was being so 'dismissive' of Sally.

Emerging intentions; continuing reflections

As I reflected on the meeting with Bessie I wondered what she considered to be her intentions for the project, she seemed blasé about the possibility of failure. She told me that she was finding Sally very irritating, as 'she only wants to discuss the deputy job'. She said 'it is interrupting our work'. I felt moved to work with Sally, given Bessie's lack of support. This meeting was transformative, as the narrative shows, my intention to help Sally emerged within this conversation; at the time I did not know what that meant or how it would look, but it was a strong commitment.

MacLean and MacIntosh's (2005) definition of intentions resonates with the movement of the feelings that I experienced in this meeting.

> First outcomes are seen as emergent and not explicable in terms of either rational teleology or normative response. Second, emphasis is given to the human micro-phenomena at work – i.e. the interplay of different biographies, aspirations, emotions and capabilities. Third attention is focused on the processes of interacting and relating as the locus of creative activity.
>
> (MacLean &Macintosh:2005:14)

I went into the meeting thinking that I would learn more about Sally, agree the project and discover Bessie's intentions. Of course all of this is overly rationalistic, and indicates my lack of reflection at the time. Instead throughout the meeting I experienced a growing sense of anger (with Bessie) and shame, with myself. What emerged was a very strong intention to work with Sally; such intentions emerge and pattern our interactions.

Joas' (1996) describes his theory of action and creativity in the social sciences as, 'The intentional character of human capacity for action, the specific corporeality and the primary sociality of all human capacity for action, (p 148). This will be further discussed, but what I find compelling is the profound sense of the corporeal and social nature of emerging

intentions. Joas' (1996) description of a 'meaningful loss of intentionality' (p170), where 'bodily phenomenon becomes an indicator of intentions we do not wish to admit having; for example, when we blush' (ibid) are resonate with my shame in this meeting. I experienced this as heat and nausea at points, and feeling tearful in writing about it.

As is clear from this description the emerging intention described as 'a commitment to work with Sally', was not based on a 'rationalistic' intention, or planned outcome for the meeting, nor was this intention locked inside my mind acting as the driving seat of my 'Cartesianly distinct' body. The intention evolved from my own personal biography, in a local interaction within the meeting, with Sally, others and in those silent conversions and private role-play that constitute reflection. In other words it was a social event, which, as will be described, continued to emerge socially.

The Meeting finishes

Bessie asked for my opinion of Sally, I felt discomfited and disloyal. It seemed inappropriate talking about Sally without her presence or acquiescence, especially given the attendance of one of Sally's peers. In responding to Bessie I noticed that I wanted to be insightful, but not insulting about Sally. I wanted to impress Bessie and be honest, but also be positive about Sally.

I described her as very determined with a strong commitment to her personal development. I said she seemed very honest and straightforward. I recognise the anodyne nature of my comments, but at this point I was still finding Sally quite difficult to work with. Our conversations seemed repetitious and circular. I did not wish to say this to Bessie given the limited time I had spent with Sally and my evolving sense of loyalty to her. Bessie asked how long 'it would take to make a difference to her behaviour'. I said it was not something that I could say but suggested we reviewed the situation after Sally and I had worked together for ten days. She agreed that the work should go ahead.

Finally I asked Bessie, given her critical view of Sally, why she wanted to keep Sally and why she wanted me to work with her. She said that she needed Sally, who she described as 'highly technically skilled and very difficult to replace'. She also said that she would like to help

Sally to develop her leadership skills, although expressed strong doubt about whether this was possible. These were her first positive comments. At the time I assumed these were her intentions, I come away feeling embarrassed that I had neither said nor done anything to stop this information spilling out from Bessie.

Inclusion and exclusion

In my conversation with Bessie, I felt that I had betrayed Sally, and my own values. I have reflected extensively on my behaviour in this situation, asking myself why I did not challenge Bessie. My need for work and money did play a role, but it seemed to be something more fundamental. Initially I had assumed that I had made a 'rational decision' in not challenging Bessie. I persuaded myself that, if I kept quiet, I would get the project and that would help both Sally and myself. However by my fourth or fifth iteration of this narrative my explanation seemed weak and inauthentic.

I started to reflect upon my sense of inclusion when participating in 'gossip'. In my meeting with Bessie we co-created a mood of cosiness, lunch on the table, talking about someone not present, a busy senior person spending a long time with me. I felt that something more was in play. Indeed I had a sense of inclusion when I was talking to Bessie; I became aware that Sally was the outsider. This feeling of inclusion and exclusion often strikes me, when in organisations, around the equine community, at DMan residentials. It affects me very powerfully, as Elias (1970) in describing power said,

> Balances of power are not only to be found in the great arena of relations between states, where they are often spectacular and attract most attention. They form an integral element of all human relationships.
>
> (Elias:1970:74)

On those occasions where I have felt excluded, I have a sense of powerlessness and terror. At the moment I am still making sense of this in the context of my commitment to Sally, which seemed to arise within the meeting with Bessie. I am still exploring whether it has relevance to other clients and my research inquiry.

Elias and Scotson (1965) have given a detailed and illuminating description of inclusion and exclusion in their study of Winston Parva, a small suburb in the Midlands. They describe the interaction between the established and outsider groups in Winston Parva where one group was seen as more powerful than another. They focus on the 'differentials of cohesion and integration' (ibid, p 59) as an aspect of power differences.

What makes this study particularly interesting is the nature of the differences; there was a clear distinction between those who had lived there for several generations (inhabiting Zones A and B), and those who were new to the area, (living in Zone C). There were little apparent differences between Zone B the 'village' and Zone C the 'estate'; similar employment profiles, class and race, however there was a strong sense of superiority from inhabitants of Zone B. This was based 'simply' on the distinction between old and new families. The 'villagers' stigmatised inhabitants of Zone C as not clean, rejecting concourse with them, seeing themselves as superior. As Elias and Scotson (1965) investigated more closely it became apparent that there were elites, even within the established group (the 'village'). They remark that all the woman in the 'village', and most of the men 'appeared to know the status and prestige rating' of every family, society and area.

Elias and Scotson (1965) described gossip as having a 'strong integrating function' as well as being one of the main leisure activities. Gossip played an important role in maintaining or severing links.

> Even within the "village" itself gossip had by no means only the function of supporting people of whom the ruling "village" opinion approved and of cementing relationships between the participants. It also had the function of excluding people and cutting relations. It could serve as a highly effective instrument of rejection … the merciless hardness with which this formidable weapon was used communally by people, many of whom seemed individually well meaning and kind-hearted was not uncharacteristic
>
> (Elias & Scotson:1965:94)

In this sense, gossip maintained the inclusion of some and the exclusion of others. There was both 'praise' and 'blame' gossip in Winston Parva. The 'praise gossip' served to reinforce ties and inclusion; the 'blame gossip' reinforced exclusion.

My sense of the experience with Bessie was that Sally was one of 'the excluded'. She did not seem to conform to the dominant norms, Bessie seemed committed to excluding Sally, I noticed this particularly when Bessie described her as having been 'fat, frumpy and single until recently'. Interestingly Bessie, and other members of her team, had been with CS for many years, I wondered if Bessie's' 'exclusion' of Sally related more to her being a relative newcomer, maybe these endless criticisms were a justification for excluding Sally to 'Zone C'. I was, for the moment, being treated as a 'respectable outsider', as were the interviewers in Winston Parva. Nevertheless I participated as part of the group, I was included. When I consider my co-creation of this meeting I am now clear that my fear of exclusion played an important role.

Elias (1939) talks about how the nature of interaction automatically comprises power relationships. He posits that by entering into any relationship we constrain (and enable) and are constrained (and enabled) by those with whom we engage. In the work that he did with Scotson (1965) he showed how relationships include some and exclude others; how these figurations favour some at the expense of others. These feeling are very powerful and are experienced as a sense of 'we', which are inseparable from 'I'. My feelings in the meeting were paradoxically wanting and not wanting to be included. They indubitably played a role in my emerging intentions regarding working with Sally.

My fear of being excluded from this meeting contributed to my co-creation of this conversation, my sense of shame at the realisation of this had an impact on my feelings about Sally. I believe that my experience of value conflict, located in a bodily experience of shame provoked a shift in my commitment to Sally. As I will discuss later I am still at the early stage of my thinking regarding values, embodiment, power and intention; no doubt this will continue to evolve through my research inquiry.

Sally gets some feedback

Sally and I got together after lunch and she asked me what Bessie had said. I did not mention any of the personal information, giving only the information that seemed directly relevant to her failure to get the deputy's job. I felt very uncomfortable, as if I was lying. When she asked me what I had said about her, I felt relieved that here, at least, I could be truthful. Sally told

me that Steve had come to see her, after the meeting, and told her that I had been both positive and discreet about her. My overriding impression of this experience was that I had 'betrayed my own values'.

At present I am aware of the role of values in this discussion; I have been noticing it more with each iteration, yet seemed to have avoided the issue. I am struggling with understanding how, if at all, intentions and values are related. Stacey (2003) in his description of intentions as emergent; postulates that they are 'organising the experience of relating, as do the responses these intentions call forth', (p. 417). If ethics emerge in our interactions, as I am suggesting that intentions do, are they just another patterning theme; or is there a relationship between them? I am aware that this is an area, which I 'intend' to consider further. Joas (2000) suggests that the word 'value' has taken the place of the word 'good' within the philosophical tradition. He talks about the importance of exploring the 'action contexts and types of experience' within which 'something is experienced as a value' (p12). It seems that Joas (2000) is considering from whence values come, a similar question runs through the literature on intention. My discussion of the emergence of intentions throughout the meeting with Bessie is speculative; my description of the meeting is highly emotionally charged. Each time I write about this meeting I experience a strong sense of upset, a conflicted feeling. As Joas (2000) says,

> Value commitments clearly do not arise from conscious intentions, and yet we experience the feeling of 'I can do no other' which accompanies a strong value commitment not as a restriction, but as the highest expression of our free will.
>
> (Joas:2000:5)

Joas (2000) is making a clear link between values and intentions here. My experience in the meeting was of a strongly evolving sense of a commitment to Sally about whom I had previously felt ambivalent. This could be described as a 'value commitment'; I came away feeling 'I could do no other' (ibid p.6) than help Sally professionally. This experience is one of several themes emerging, and I am clear that I am alluding to a fundamental issue that will benefit from further consideration. I notice that in my professional practice, these ideas are starting to pattern my interactions; it will be useful to explore this further as I continue my inquiry.

A Continuing Conversation

Over the next few months Sally and I spent days together. She had finally 'got her feedback' from Bessie and gradually talked less about her anger. She told me that she had started to accept what had happened, and often defended Bessie, when others complained about her. We attended meetings, discussing her feelings about her participation; she often referred to feeling 'shy' with strangers, especially in meetings. She believed that this was the reason that Rick and Bessie had described her as 'lacking presence'; apparently her behaviour in meetings had been a focus for the examples they had given.

We took videos of some of our conversations and meetings. After watching one of these videos Sally was amazed at her 'stillness' when others were talking, she said 'I thought I was much more engaged than I look'. On one occasion we were watching a video together and Sally said, "I look so bored, actually I was really interested". She expostulated saying, 'but I was really interested, why do I look so bored? Stacey & Griffin (2005) discuss 'gesture-response' as

> Action means the physical movements of a body constituting *gestures to and responses from others* such as the vocal gesture-response of sound, the visual gesture-response of facial expression and the felt gesture-response of changes in the bodily rhythms that are feelings and emotions. Such action is fundamentally communicative in that every gesture of one evokes responses in others.
>
> (Stacey & Griffin:2005:14-15)

This was interesting as an example of a visual gesture-response, giving Sally an opportunity to reflect, Sally felt that this was a helpful insight into why, at times, people saw her as 'not expressive'. I remember my feeling of astonishment as I had previously commented on her 'stillness' and how it could be misinterpreted (as had others), but it was at this moment that it meant something to her. It seems that such iterations within conversations, as with my experience of writing this project, can produce transformative moments.

Gradually she started to interact with people at meetings, saying hello, chatting with them in a way that she had not done before, our conversations became more free flowing and

confidential. So why did so much of our time together focus on this aspect of her communication; ignoring much of the other comments made by Bessie and Rick? How did this relate to her 'getting those leadership skills the need for promotion, which Sally had originally mentioned? Our focus emerged despite earlier espoused intentions.

My evolving sense of intention

In an earlier iteration I wrote 'After my meeting with Bessie I had developed the intention to help Sally to develop a more free-flowing conversation about herself and her experience over the job'. Clearly at this stage I was still committed to a 'thought before action' notion of intention, which I could 'implement'. My views have evolved in engaging with the iterative process, both written and spoken, that underpins the apposite research method for a complex responsive processes approach, (Stacey & Griffin, 2005). I have realised that in my conversations with Sally the major theme organising our interactions related to working with Sally's relationship with new people. The organising theme was not 'chosen', but evolved through our work together. In writing iteratively, and in many conversations with others and myself about intention, I have noticed that as Sally and I worked together certain themes were illuminated; whilst others seemed to disappear.

> What each of us does affects others and what they do affects each of us. We inevitably both constrain and enable each other. Thus each of us is continually forming intentions and making choices of our next action but because we are interdependent none of us can *control* the consequences of what we do. The consequences emerge in the interplay of all our intentions and those consequences prompt further action on the part of us all, the consequences of which will also emerge…………..
>
> (Stacey:2005:4)

On each visit different types of interactions occurred, sometimes our conversations would lead to improvisational work. In these times we focussed on acting out and responding to emotions, some we videoed and watched.

Sally often referred to a comment from Rick that 'she missed other peoples' signals', she kept saying 'how do I know I am not picking up signals if I miss them'. I suggested that we

videoed ourselves talking about something upsetting in our own lives. Sally felt ambivalent so I suggested that I spoke first. She listened intently to my story, even proffering advice. She then told me about her brother's death and how frightening it had been. 'I realised that I could carry this gene thing and I will not know until I develop the symptoms'; she cried as she talked, and I also felt close to tears. Sitting in this poky overheated room in London, I felt very moved and inspired to continue to support Sally in whatever way that I could. It was not a 'planned exercise', but it was an amazing experience; and I felt much closer to this woman who I had seen as dour and difficult.

I felt uncertain about my work with Sally, I did not have a clear brief. Before our meetings I wondered what we would do; we always started with her news and how she felt, I never knew what would come from this. It felt very frightening at times. In the past I'd had a sense of what my business sponsors wanted, however vague; this felt messier. Intentions ebbed and flowed, re-emerging and evolving throughout our conversations. On reflection this is how client work can feel, but previously I have been less willing to accept the messy, uncertain nature of my work. However I think it is important to acknowledge that at the moment I am making sense of my work differently, I am not claiming that, in this project, my professional practice was completely different, nor am I sure what it means for future work. I believe that my evolving sense of intention will continue to interact with considerations of my professional practice, which will continue to emerge throughout my inquiry.

Joas' (1996) new theory of action posits creativity as a fundamental aspect of humanity, postulating a 'non-teleological view of intentionality'. In other words people do not rationally choose a goal, achieve it and then move on to the next goal. Instead he proposes that intentionality is a constantly emerging aspect of human interaction with people pursuing goals within patterns of interaction.

> According to this alternative view, goal setting does not take place by an act
> of the intellect prior to the actual action, but is instead the result of a reflection on
> aspirations and tendencies that are pre-reflective and have already always been
> operative. In this act of reflection, we thematise aspirations, which are normally at
> work without our being actively aware of them. But where exactly are these
> aspirations located? They are located in our bodies. It is the body's capabilities, habits
> and ways of relating to the environment which form the background to all conscious

goal-setting in other words to our intentionality. Intentionality itself, then, consists in a self-reflective control, which we exercise over our current behaviour.

<div align="right">(Joas;1996:175)</div>

My original concern arose from my view of intention as a goal. I assumed a pre-determined plan, which I would carry through, using familiar patterns of behaviour. This was not my experience with Sally. Our focus on the way Sally conversed with people patterned our interactions, seemingly unconsciously. In writing this narrative I can see that my work with Sally was much closer to Joas' (1996) notion of how intentions emerge.

The Corporeality of Emergent Intentions

In their description of the Forman-Ali world championship fight, MacLean and MacIntosh (2005) give a detailed description of Ali's 'embodied experience'. This rich metaphor led to me to think about schooling my horse. How, before I mount, I 'have' an intention; perhaps improving a particular dressage movement. In the moment of mounting him, the physical interaction leads to shifting and moving intentions. For example, recently, I decided to work on improving my position in the saddle. As I mounted, asking to go forward, he napped (a half rear indicating he did not want to go forward). I immediately felt scared; any thought of 'my position' disappeared, for a second I froze, imagining him rearing higher, maybe even going over backwards. I remembered my trainer, on a previous occasion, yelling at me to put my shoulders back and kick him. I gave him one sharp kick and he shot forward (this takes place within seconds). The intention to kick him, which could result in him rearing higher, emerged in the moment. I moved from terror to action very quickly. My intentions evolved, although my 'plan' had disappeared in the moment-by-moment interaction between my horse and myself. This description exemplifies Joas' (1996) notion of intentionality as self-reflection affecting our behaviour. In the moment he napped, I felt terror, experienced as feeling nauseous and exemplified by a change in my position to a hunched, tense, rounded back; followed by determination, exemplified by a shift to an upright upper body and relaxed arms.

This experience resonates with Joas' (1996) focus on the body.

> We recognise that the practical mediacy of the human organism and its situations precede all conscious goal setting. A consideration of the concept of purpose must ineluctably involve taking account of corporeality of human action…

(Joas:1996:158)

This also echoes my experience when working with clients, a sense of panic prior to saying something that may not be well received; a feeling of shame or embarrassment indicated by a blush and a sensation in my stomach experienced as fear. I had this experience with Sally. Bessie had told Sally that she did not always use language correctly. When Sally and I discussed this she became very upset, crying and blushing. She told me that one sign of the onset of her genetic disorder was aphasia. Whilst I listened, feeling sympathetic, I was remembering times when she had spoken very quickly and sometimes lapsed into dialect. I felt sick and nervous, feeling heat spreading up my neck. I felt conflicted between sympathy and a desire to help, underpinned by a sense of embarrassment. I was frightened that she may be offended and further upset. Gradually she started to calm down, I told her that I believed it was 'simply a use of language' and asked how I could help. She was pleased, asking me to point out when I noticed it. Given such experiences and the local nature of them makes the notion of a pre-planned intention seem over-simplistic. When I consider my experience of working with Sally (and others) much of the time I have felt close to the edge wondering what we were doing.

Despite my sense of intention as emergent I am still unsure how this new understanding will impact my practice in discussing new projects with clients. In a response to my most recent version of this project my supervisor wrote 'give a smattering of verbatim exchanges, in which you have "made promises" in the past, compare this with what you might say to a client now'. In the past I have written proposals based on discussions with clients, what follows is a brief excerpt from a recent proposal.

"During the diagnostic stage of the programme more focused objectives will be derived. However certain issues around leadership have already been discussed, suggesting that the following aims may be of relevance. The project will: -

Increase leaders' ability to motivate staff, thereby encouraging staff to choose *** as their preferred place of work…."

His challenge struck me as an important aspect of my continuing research inquiry, I felt uncertain about my response. While my thinking on intention has been radically altered, the impact on my contracting conversations and any promises I may make is still evolving. This was highlighted this week when I was talking to an existing client about some work that she would like us to do together. She had asked for help in writing a proposal. At one point, when we were talking about writing down the outcomes, I said "You know I think this is all ****", she smiled and I continued to help.

Completing the First Phase

Intentions and evaluation

Finally Bessie and I met again, near the end of the project. She said that she was really astonished by how Sally had changed; saying she was much more relaxed and needed far less attention. She commented on how Sally seemed calmer and 'different'. She told me that others had also 'noticed a difference'. Given that I had little sense of her aim or purpose for my work I found it difficult to know whether she was satisfied with her 'investment'. We sat together but this time there was no food, it was not 'cosy', Bessie was far less friendly. She did not seem happy, nevertheless she suggested that I could continue to meet with Sally on a quarterly basis.

It is interesting to make sense of this from an alternative perspective to the rational, autonomous, moral notion of human beings. I had always believed that my business sponsor, by employing me, indicated a desire to help and develop my clients. I am still unclear about Bessie's intentions for this professional engagement but I had no sense of celebration with regard to her view of 'Sally's development'. I was left feeling slightly uneasy and dissatisfied. I believe that this relates back to my sense of having been perceived as a 'respectable outsider', or even an 'insider' (Elias & Scotson, 1965) in my initial meeting with Bessie, whereas now I felt excluded. In addition, although my view of intention was evolving, I was still attached to the notion of me as an autonomous human being succeeding with a piece of client work; this did not feel like success.

On the final day Sally and I talked about our experiences. She said that she had found our discussions useful and had learned much from the videoing and improvisational work. She stressed that with new people she still found it harder to be sociable, and added that she would have previously 'only spoken when she had something to say'. She now made more effort to be sociable in these situations as she realised that this was why she was seen as 'closed'. She said that she had expected my work with her to be more like training. She had mainly hoped that I would help her deal with her shyness. I thought this an interesting comment remembering our first meeting in London, and my sense of uncertainty when discussing how she could behave differently in meetings, and my concern about whether this was real consulting. On reflection I see how we co-created this theme, which was hugely important to our conversations

She added that she had learned to recognise, 'what I have to do so that people notice me in meetings and maintain the social niceties'. She stressed that she had always been able to do this with people that she knew but now felt more relaxed with new people. It was clear from her conversation that she believed that she had developed as a result of our work. I am wondering in what way this constitutes helping her with her leadership, we had moved away from Sally's initially expressed 'intention' to get the promotion. So my sense at the moment is that given my developing postulation of intentions as emergent, I am still uncertain what that implies for 'evaluating client work', an area of continuing research interest. I was also struck by her comments about the improvisational work and on the occasions where strong emotion was corporeally expressed, through tears and blushing; or as Joas (1996) describes these experiences, a 'meaningful loss of intentionality' (p170).

She said that I had been a model for her in conversations with new people, adding that I always looked confident and in control. As I write this I am amazed at how others invent our identity, as there had been many times at CS where I had felt very uncertain. She reiterated that she had been very offended by Bessie's comments that she hid behind papers at meetings. However she now felt much calmer about her position. She said that she had decided to 'put her papers on the table and look at people'. She felt that this had helped her be more interactive in meetings.

I considered this to be a 'successful' project, and in some ways it was. Sally was pleased with her growing confidence, and content that she had heard good things from Bessie. However, what is immediately noticeable in this 'evaluative' conversation was that her 'original intention' had not been achieved. She had not got the promotion, somebody else had. We had discussed few of the issues raised by Bessie and Rick, we had done no work on her 'lack of a business-wide view' or 'strategic naivety'; we had not tried to 'improve her writing skills' nor had we worked extensively on her use of dialect.

Despite expressing her satisfaction with our work she said, 'I've done the shyness, I've done the looking more confident, I've put my papers on the table, so what is it they want me to work on to get me promoted what do I do next'. I sensed Sally's frustration, and shared it to some extent, although we had done this work and we shared a sense of 'something working', nevertheless, my business sponsor, Bessie, was not satisfied. I told Sally that I felt Bessie was not happy with our results, she told me that she believed Bessie was uncomfortable with me. She thought that Bessie thought I was 'too flamboyant in my dress code' and added that she believed that Bessie found me somewhat 'scary'. She said that Bessie acknowledged a big change in her behaviour and that Bessie had asked her regularly 'what did Cathie do?'. She said at one point she seemed 'obsessed'. When I asked why, she said that she believed Bessie wanted to be able 'to do it too'. Finally I asked, what she thought Bessie's intentions were for the project. Sally replied 'I know the answer, in one sentence, "because Rick suggested it"'. Sally was suggesting that Bessie's intentions were to please Rick, my view was that Bessie wanted to 'keep Sally off her back'. Underlying all of this was that, apparently, Bessie did want Sally to stay, something she had told both Sally and me. Ironically since that conversation (several months ago), Sally has been offered a big job in another company. She phoned recently and thanked me, saying, 'A lot of the stuff we did really helped in the interview, so I wanted you to know'.

Thus I had 'failed' my brief. We did not 'work on the pre-determined areas for development', nor did I satisfy my sponsor's desire to keep Sally in the organisation. Sally did not get the promotion, and is now leaving. Reflecting on our work together our focus emerged and evolved and I had no clear aim or design in mind prior to interacting with Sally in a moment-by-moment way. In particular I remember moments of anger, usually about something around Bessie, who frequently did not do things that she had agreed with Sally. My sense of Bessie's 'unfairness' to Sally is a recurrent theme in my reflections on our conversations; and

even in writing about this now I feel angry about the way Sally was treated. I think Stacey's (2005) summarises this when describing how humans choose actions,

> The choices may be made on the basis of conscious desires and intentions, or unconscious desires and choices, for example those that are habitual, impulsive, obsessive, compulsive, compelling or inspiring. In other words, human action is always evaluative, sometimes consciously and at other times unconsciously.
>
> (Stacey:2005:9)

Stacey (2005) continues saying that these choices are based on our values and norms; he refers to this as ideology. He discusses how according to Elias (1970) our actions all arise from ideology, which in turn emerge moment-by-moment in the interaction of our bodies. My experience of this project resonates with a sense of *corporeality* (Joas, 1996)), reflecting on those moments where I would experience a 'meaningful loss of intentionality' (ibid p 162), heat rising through my neck as Sally told me yet another story about Bessie's behaviour towards her. However I am left with some uncertainty about how I evaluate what I do, I will discuss this further in my concluding remarks. On a previous version my supervisor wrote, 'There's a slight "they all lived happily ever after feel" to this ending, which may or may not be what you want.' This was not how it seemed to me, but it enabled me to go back to my narrative and realise that it did sound that way; in rereading it I felt detached from this writer (me), who sounded rather smug. I was struck by how this research methodology, which involves iterations and conversation has profoundly impacted my view of my work, and will undoubtedly affect my professional practice.

A Work in Progress

So what is my contribution?

It is important to consider how our work contributes to knowledge and practice, which is one way of considering how our research could be considered 'generalisable'. Williams (2005), responds to this question by suggesting that it 'states unconscious assumptions about knowledge as a stock of something that by virtue of contribution goes up' p47. He draws on

the work of Rorty (1998) who posits that in research we should abandon the 'pursuit of truth' as researchers and consider what works and what is justified. Williams (2005) continues,

> These Rortian attitudes seem to be directly germane to the research activities that I associate with the idea of complex responsive processes and to the product of research outcomes informed by such a way of thinking. These are most often detailed and extended reflective narratives of experience that integrate… the intensely localised character of individually recalled live experiences explicitly with a critical theoretical perspective.
>
> (William:2005:51)

This highlights the importance of focussing on a particular story from within my experience. The value of the iterative process, both in terms of writing, and the conversations held with other colleagues, learning set and supervisors, has contributed to an extensive and rigorous exploration of intention as an emergent phenomenon. As Stacey, (2005), highlights this research has been conducted within complex responsive processes of relating,

> The purpose of this iterative approach is to make sense of experience and as the researcher goes through this process, he or she experiences movements in his or her thoughts. The purpose is not to solve a problem or make an improvement to the organisation but to develop the practitioners' skill in paying attention to the complexity of the local, micro interactions he or she is engaged in because it is in these that wider organisational patterns emerge.
>
> (Stacey:2005:24)

As I have indicated throughout this text I have experienced a clear sense of movement in my thinking about intention.

Emergent intentions

In the past my view of intention has been as a private, pre-determined plan. This has been predicated on an 'if-then' notion of causality, underpinned by an assumption of human beings

as autonomous and rational. Whilst I have described my sense of unease with the notion of predicting outcomes from my work, nevertheless I used to discuss intentions with clients, with whom I would agree outcomes. In writing about my work with Sally I have recognised that my view was over simplistic. Initially I had talked about my intentions for this work. Indeed all involved with this project described their own separate individual intentions. Sally's was to 'sort out the problems' and get promotion as soon as possible. Bessie seemed mainly concerned with 'getting Sally off her back', but keeping her working for CS. Mine was to help them to achieve this.

In writing and reflecting on this piece of work; my view of intention has evolved. I have been particularly affected by the work of Joas (1996), MacLean and MacIntosh (2005), Stacey (2005) and Elias and Scotson (1965). Shaw (2002) started the avalanche with her description of a practice that resonated with my own, while confronting me with my unthought through assumptions. Initially I would have said that in doing this project I started to question my assumptions regarding intentions; actually it has been in writing this narrative and the iterative nature of producing it, that my thinking has been transformed. As Polkinghorne (1989) said, narrative provides us with an opportunity to delve into questions in a 'naturalistic way'. These reflexive constant reiterations, against a myriad of have provided a process to research intention.

It is clear that many themes have arisen from writing this narrative. As is apparent my view of intention is no longer predicated on the individual, instead I am starting to understand the inherently social notion of intention. I believe I have moved on from my rationalistic view so clearly demonstrated by the work of Dennett (1989), Adair (1998), Searle, (1982) and Robins (1984). I am no longer concerned that complex responsive processes thinking, and in particular the notion of intentions as emergent, implies a deterministic view. Rather, as interdependent actors, we influence by bringing our generalisations into local interaction thus making them particular. Intentions arise organising our conversations, within co-created interactions.

My original view was located in the belief that human beings are autonomous and rational, thinking and planning before acting. I am now developing my understanding of human beings as interdependent and emotional, whose intentions continually evolve in response to the gestures of others and in action. In particular Joas' (1996) action theory has been pivotal to

my evolving understanding of intention, his focus on the corporeality of intention, which I have attempted to make sense of with examples from both my dressage, and professional practice, has resonated with my experience of emerging intentions. The emphasis on the embodiment of intention, the 'meaningful loss of intentionality' echoed seminal moments of emerging intentions in my work with Sally. I continue to be interested in exploring the relationship between power and intentions. As the story of my meeting with Bessie indicates, Elias and Scotson's (1965) work on the established and the outsider has influenced my thinking about how intentions emerge, and in what way they relate to other organising conversational themes such as corporeal experiences and emotions.

I am left wondering what this all means for my professional practice, complex responsive processes thinking is a serious challenge to descriptions of my work in an environment, which is dominated by an overly rationalistic view of how a consultant can 'plan, design and achieve pre-determined outcomes'. Earlier I alluded to a potential project for the future, in order to gain 'buy-in from the group executive'; my business sponsor will be making promises on our behalf.

However as Christensen (2005) says

> An important intention in emerging participative exploration is to avoid following a prescribed, detailed 'scientific method' and, instead, engage in a process of ongoing sense making of the experience of participating in the fluid interactions with other people.
>
> (Christensen:2005:99)

This highlights for me the potential difficulty of 'predicting' what will emerge from Project Three.

Conclusion

This narrative explores emerging intentions within the framework of my professional practice. I have given a detailed description of work with a client, demonstrating my evolving research inquiry and my engagement with relevant literature. No one asked if I have 'met my brief', or if we have fulfilled our intentions, yet I am still left feeling uncertain. I intend to continue my

inquiry into the nature of intention and what that means for my work with clients. As I said earlier the project was a failure in terms of many of the original intentions, although my immediate client was satisfied. So how am I able to evaluate my practice given the emergent and co-created nature of intentions?

As I am still at the early stages of my work through the doctorate I am aware that different themes will continue to emerge. I am also conscious that this, project is the work that I am producing in this 'living moment' (Griffin 2002). I am aware that my views will continue to evolve, at present I am interested in continuing my exploration into intention as a theme, organising conversations, between interdependent actors, and examining how this occurs within action and how this relates to power and embodiment. I am already conscious, in some recent work that I am looking at my professional practice differently. However I still struggle to make sense of the kind of 'promises' I can make to clients in conversations about outcomes for our work. I am fortunate that at this point my contribution to the field is evolving as I continue to engage in the doctoral programme.

Reflections on Project Two

Throughout Project Two I developed a new understanding of intention. In focussing on a piece of work with a senior executive (Sally), I started to see that my professional practice was less structured than I had previously believed. In particular I understood how a project can be deemed successful without achieving the initially discussed outcomes. This has resulted in my acceptance of planning and evaluation in consultancy as emergent, something I have become aware of in this reflection. My concern with promises and outcomes has diminished, although I am still committed to being successful in my practice.

I analysed how my understanding of intention as an internal, independent phenomenon, a precursor to action was evolving into seeing intention as a 'theme organising conversation' (Stacey 2003). As I reflect on this project I realise how in exploring my relationship with Sally, and others from her team, I started to understand how intentions emerge in particular kinds of conversation with clients.

I was starting to appreciate the significance of evolving power relationships in particular through examining Elias' concept of inclusion and exclusion. This has led to my developing understanding of my professional practice as I have become increasingly aware of the way in which power is fundamental to consultant-client relationships; in particular that this power ebbs and flows according to dependence. This has led to my inquiry considering how the enabling-constraining nature of relationships impacts on consulting and is frequently overlooked.

Through comparing the prevailing view of intention as private, individual, pre-planned and a precursor to action (Horvath et al, 1990; Robins, 1984; Dennett, 1989) with intention as emerging, corporeal and social, I started to evolve a different way of understanding human beings. My view now is that we are interdependent, social and reflexive, rather than autonomous, independent and ethical. I was particularly interested in the implications of this evolving perspective within the context of my professional practice. I started to acknowledge, to myself, that the prevailing view of objectives driven learning was not in line with my experience. More importantly I started to accept the uncertainty involved in my practice.

I detailed how there was a fundamental interdependence in the consultant-client relationship, which is frequently overlooked in the management literature, except in work that has been recently developed as a result of complex responsive processes thinking (Christensen, 2005; O'Flynn, 2005). It has been interesting to reflect upon how my uncertainty about 'what it is that I am doing?' stopped me from locating my work within the management literature. Instead I was drawn to the philosophical and sociological. I was still struggling with what I was doing with clients, which eventually led to my inquiry into identity formation. Finally it exemplifies, if not discusses, the power of the social, iterative, reflexive research method.

In the next project I deepen my inquiry into emerging intentions, and planning, within the context of arresting organisational incidents. I pick up on the embodied nature of intention, comparing it with Searle's, (1983) seminal work on Intentionality and Goleman's (2002) work on emotionally intelligent leadership. I consider my developing understanding of the responsive nature of my professional practice, against the backdrop of an overly rationalistic view of leadership, highlighting how my clients ignore their espoused views in their work with me.

Project Three

Emergent Intentions; an exploration within a leadership project

Introduction

In this project I consider the relationship between emerging intentions, corporeality and emotions within the context of my professional practice. I reflect in detail upon those moments in which intentions seems to emerge or shift. I draw upon the work of Stacey and Joas to conceptualise how my evolving notion of intention relates to planning, an issue that exercised my thinking in earlier projects.

I consider the impact of this inquiry upon how I view my work as a consultant working in a highly structured organisational environment. I focus throughout the narratives on my work with clients in a large retail bank, (Xeno). In particular I reflect upon work with a senior executive, Harry. In describing our work together I examine an approach to leadership development, which has been adopted across his organisation. I consider how this rational approach to 'development' is often ignored in practice, despite being the dominant discourse.

Theoretically I consider Searle's notion of Intentionality and examining whether this may contribute to my inquiry into intention. I discuss a popular view of emotional intelligence and leadership, referring to the work of Goleman. I examine those 'moments of being' where I experience a sense of emerging intentions, grounding my discussion in Joas' view of intention, as emergent, embodied and social. I explore how this relates to Elias' work on figuration and emotion and I begin to make sense of my professional practice from a complex responsive processes way of thinking.

In this project I start to elucidate my professional practice, in a way that highlights the differences, as well as the similarities, with the dominant discourse on leadership

development. Thereby starting to offer a contribution to knowledge and professional practice in this area.

Meeting Harry. Our original work together

Some History

Harry and I have worked together, intermittently, over some years. He has been steadily promoted since we first met; an ambitious man, he is very keen to continue 'working on his personal development'. He works hard and is very able. Nevertheless he sometimes lacks confidence in his own abilities, although this is probably not obvious to those who work with him.

Harry and I met several years ago when I was negotiating some consultancy work. I had spent several months discussing a leadership project with the HR Director (George). During this period my house was badly burned. I had lost most of my property, my cat had died and I was living in a hotel. I had regularly been 'cancelled' by George. I was furious when he had 'forgotten a meeting', deciding that I no longer wanted the work. Nevertheless, when George invited me to a conference in order to 'meet the people that you will be working with', I agreed, on condition that I would be paid.

The conference was large, attended by 250 managers, who were working with a division of about 5,000 people. In our many conversations George and I had discussed the importance of working with management teams, both individually and in groups. I arrived at the conference for lunch and was told, by George, I wouldn't be working with management teams but senior individuals, across this division. He said, in passing, 'I think the scatter gun approach would be more effective,' wandering away before I could reply. I could feel myself getting hot and irritated, I 'filed it away' for future reference. During lunch, Daniel, the leader of this division, came over to speak to me. He introduced himself rather abruptly, saying 'don't just observe, you had better get involved as well'. I replied, 'but I don't know anything', 'neither do we', he said and walked off. I felt confused but decided that perhaps it was an invitation, (although he had neither sounded, nor looked, very friendly). The conference was 'facilitated' by a psychologist, (Robert) and as he introduced the session, I realised that it was the first meeting of a new division. I was not introduced and sat, smiling and nodding, feeling rather

anxious. At some point we were asked to talk to someone in the room. Harry introduced himself, saying that he was head of a large business unit. I explained that I was a consultant, and told him a little about the planned project. We chatted, and I thought he was charming. The conference finished, it was to be followed by a meal with a free bar.

I returned to my room and phoned a friend who had asked for some coaching. I ended our conversation saying 'I don't know what is going on, I'm not sure why I am here' and then went to dinner. I sat next to Robert and Harry. We had a rather desultory conversation, which ended abruptly when they left to go to the bar. I wandered into the bar, feeling rather sober and met them again. Harry suddenly turned to me and said, 'what the f*** are you doing, you know how difficult this is for us and you just swan in here. I wasted fifteen minutes talking to you this afternoon and you're a f***ing consultant. I could have been meeting colleagues, you just wasted my time, this is a really difficult situation, we don't need someone observing us'. I was very taken aback. Whilst I felt embarrassed, standing there, blushing and being shouted at, I could sense that he was very upset about something. I said, 'I am really sorry you feel like that'. He continued asking, 'how do you think Daniel felt knowing you were here to observe him, this is our first meeting as a division, the last thing he needs is some psychologist assessing him'. I replied, 'I really apologise; I had no idea that my presence was perceived in that way. I can only repeat how sorry I am and thank you for your honesty'. He seemed to accept this, and walked away.

I went to find Daniel and told him that there had obviously been a misunderstanding about my presence. I suggested that we meet the following week. Daniel told me that he and his colleagues knew nothing about me. George had told them that I was a psychologist there to observe the conference and they had assumed that I was 'assessing their performance'. They had started working together the previous month due to a major restructuring; jobs had been lost and many people were feeling demoted (including Harry and Daniel). Daniel invited me to their next senior team meeting. I came away feeling very angry with George. I remember sitting in a café in Brighton, with a friend Leonie, saying, 'this is not going to work. I have just been misled. Well unless they do it my way they can f***off. I can't see this project happening.'

I went down on the train the following week wearing a new suit (the only suit I had after the fire), and, accidentally, poured coffee all over it. I felt furious with myself, the bank and with

George, I knew that the meeting would be over quickly. I walked into the meeting and saw a sea of people, including Harry. After Daniel had introduced me, I was asked what I thought I could offer. I snapped that I had been invited by their Managing Director to run a leadership programme focussing on 'humanistic leadership' and that he had told me that his executives were too aggressive. I said, 'I am only willing to do this programme if I can work with teams who want to do it, both individually and in groups'. Much to my astonishment they discussed my suggestions regarding the importance of team, and finally agreed to all my requests. The project was 'agreed' and went ahead in the following months.

Reading the mainstream literature about this 'contracting phrase', there is a list of how this should be achieved, which sounds very smooth and linear, (Hayden 1999). Indeed he provides an, enviably neat solution, which he calls 'The Universal Marketing Cycle. He describes this as a 'marketing pipeline', claiming that it maintains a steady flow of clients. Hayden lists the steps, which I have adapted solely for the purposes of presentation,

- Attract prospects
- Make contacts
- Gather leads
- Collect referrals

Pour into the pipeline (follow-up) and then

- Get presentation
- Close sale
- Provide service
- Get referral

(Hayden:1999:24)

This does not resonate with my experience, although it is very alluring. Many of these conversations seem messy, uncertain and full of anxiety. Obviously one is not aware of what is happening in others' lives, they did not know about my circumstances, I knew nothing about this major reorganisation which had been difficult for all of the people that I had met, including George.

> Since the persons comprising an organisation are interdependent it follow that none of them can simply choose what is to happen to all of them. What happens to all of them will emerge in the interplay of their intentions and no one can be in control of this interplay… there is no polarisation of deliberate intention and emergence and emergence has nothing to do with chance Instead emerging patterns are becoming what they are becoming because of the interplay of many, many intentions, in many, many local situations.
>
> (Stacey:2006:405)

In this meeting something new emerged from many local interactions. Stacey (2005) illuminates the way in which patterns arise locally as a result of the many interactions of individuals. He points to the way in which the patterns that emerge are related to the biographies of the individuals, groups and organisations that are involved.

Intention and emotion

This incident is typical of a pattern in my life where I become increasingly angry at a situation and suddenly decide that I have had enough. It is usually after a lot of uncertainty; I would rather lose something than continue with the uncertainty. I am willing to say things that I have not felt able to say before. If I consider my feelings before I came to this meeting, I had decided that I had been treated badly, that I was not going to get what I wanted and had decided that I would not get the project. Before the meeting I felt willing to tell them to 'sling their hook'. Instead something different emerged, exemplifying Joas' (1996) description of intention,

> breaking with the teleological interpretation of the intentionality of action influences the image we have of the very act of setting and creating goals. According to the teleological view…this act appears to be so free that it could be called arbitrary. The actor designs his goals independently … of any influence from the outside world. If we adopt the understanding of intentionality that I am putting forward here, however, goal setting becomes the result of a situation in which the actor finds himself prevented from continuing his pre-reflective aspirations.
>
> Joas:1996:162

I went down on the train with a 'pre-reflected aspiration to not get the project', (referring back to my conversation with Leonie), and yet something different emerged. Sitting in the meeting feeling hot and angry as an embodied expression, ready to tell them that I did not want to do the project, the moving of the social identity through a co-created conversation led to an emergent intention to work together. In this paradoxical wanting and not wanting the project it is clear that there was not a particular intention that I achieved. Obviously there were many others with intentions involved in this journey. Recently Harry and I discussed this meeting, he told me 'you seemed to know what you were talking about, within minutes I looked at George and Neal and we nodded. We knew we needed something and we liked what you had to say'.

I wonder how, if at all, I contribute, to such conversations, which I experience as moving from 'stuck to free-flowing' (Stacey 2003). This feeling of being stuck often occurs around getting work. A coach once asked me. 'What do you do differently on those occasions when you get work to those times when you don't?' my response was, 'I say 'f*** it and do things I would not normally do', to which she replied, 'Well could you not replicate it?' I am now aware that while these moments seem to occur 'in my own mind' they are co-created with others as demonstrated by the previous story. Elias' (1970) discusses the 'common sense model' of individuals as, 'naively egocentric', suggesting that we ignore the figurational aspect of human activity. He continues,

> The peculiar constraint exerted by social structures over those who form them is particularly significant. We tend to explain away this compulsion by ascribing to these structures an existence – an objective reality- over and above the individuals who make them up.
>
> (Elias:1970:16)

It also resonates with my previous discussion, in Project Two, of intention. In this situation my 'intention' to tell them 'what they could do with their project' evolved into a conversation into how we could implement the project, thus highlighting the social and emergent nature of intention and describing the way in which this seems to occur. I would suggest that a new figuration of interdependent people emerged in the co-creation of intention.

According to Newton (2001),

> central to Elias' work is a conception of human agency as composed of interdependent networks. For Elias, understanding social relations means analysing the figurational development of interdependency networks and the ways in which they define power relations and inform subjectivity. Whether we wish to understand rules of emotional display and restraint, ……., or our sense of human agency. We need to place our analysis in a figurational context that is based on multigenerational, interwoven and interconnected networks of actors, or *Homines aperti* rather than the socially divorced image of the individual as a 'closed box', or *Homo clauses.*
>
> (Newton:2001:47)

Often when I am seeking work I focus on my sense of the putative clients 'having the power'. In doing this I am ignoring the way in which, within these figurations, power can ebb and flow plus the 'spark' of emotion, and how it emerges in relationship with clients. Harry and I had several experiences where I experienced a strong physiological feeling of heat and frustration, and we have had several occasions where he has become very angry with me. We have also had passionate conversations where we seemed very close. However there were times I was less aware of these physically experienced, strong emotions and this also impacted on the conversation. I discuss these later in the narrative.

> A further aspect of Elias' approach is the emphasis he places on the importance of human emotion. He argues that human beings are not merely cognitive animals but also emotional animals and that all our actions, without exception, involve a mixture of cognition and emotion. Some actions are based on a higher degree of cognition, others on a higher degree of emotion, but even the most cognitively based forms of action involve emotion as well.
>
> (Dopson:2001:518)

As my narratives indicate, this experience of strong emotion seems to relate to moments in which something novel occurs. I am suggesting that this could be an instant Joas describes as

'the relaxation of bodily control, and even when the individual asserts control, the body has an influence on action that is often unanticipated'. (Dalton, 2004, p.605).

Emotion in the workplace; the dominant discourse

This description of the play of emotion in my experience of emerging intentions differs radically from how emotion at work is often discussed. Goleman is a popular author, whose work I have used in the past, If one considers Goleman's oeuvre on emotional intelligence, his argument is grounded in a particular view of human beings as rational, autonomous and independent. His work has been quite influential in Xeno where there is a view that 'we need to improve our emotional leadership in order to be more influential leaders'.

Goleman (2002) describes a series of 'emotional competences', which he sees as crucial for success and talks about how necessary they are in determining successful leadership. He distinguishes four competences; personal competences including 'self-awareness' and 'self-management' and social competences, which he names 'social awareness' and 'relationship management'. These are broken down further into personal attributes such as 'emotional self-awareness', 'adaptability', 'empathy' and 'inspirational leadership'. He writes,

> These EI competences are not innate talents, but learned abilities, each of which has a unique contribution to making leaders more resonant, and therefore more effective. This fact speaks to an urgent business need, one with great impact on: helping leaders to lead more effectively
>
> (Goleman:2002:39)

He distinguishes clearly between reason and emotion emphasising EQ (Emotional Quotient) above IQ (Intelligence Quotient), as important to success Goleman (1994). This is very different from the work of Damasio (2000) who suggests that it is impossible for us to reason without an emotional substratum.

> In recent years both neuroscience and cognitive neuroscience have finally endorsed emotion… Moreover the presumed opposition between emotion and reason is no longer accepted without question. For example, work from my laboratory has shown

that emotion is integral to the process of reasoning and decision making, for worse and for better.

<div align="right">(Damasio:2000:40-41)</div>

Despite my criticisms of Goleman (2002, 1994) I think his work has had a useful impact on the dominant leadership discourse. In recent years my clients have been much willing to talk about the role of emotion and leadership. Working with a senior lawyer in Paris in 2001 I was challenged about my discussion of 'emotional responses in leaders who coach'. He said, 'On my management training course, I was told that managers leave their emotion at home', my reference to the work of Goleman seemed to reassure him that there was 'evidence' that emotions were important to leaders.

Leaders who coach

Although my original work with Xeno related to their desire to have more 'humanistic leaders', the projects gradually focussed on 'developing leaders who coach'. I notice that I wanted to write, 'after some discussion we (George, Harry, Neal and myself) we decided to focus on leaders who coach'. There were many discussions, but on reflection I think the focus on coaching emerged over a period of time, and was never formally agreed this. Nevertheless it became the way we all described the programme (and it is continued under this guise to this day). This exemplifies how something 'global' emerges from many local interactions.

During the project we briefly talked about Goleman's typology of leadership styles and how these impact on the 'climate'. Goleman talks about leaders who coach.

- Coaching

    How it builds resonance: Connects what a person wants with the organisation's goal

    Impact on climate: Highly positive

    When appropriate To help an employee improve performance by building long-term capabilities

<div align="right">(Goleman:2002:55)</div>

In this way I linked Goleman's work with the earlier 'humanistic' approach to leadership. During these projects I was encouraging participants to consider a broader approach to coaching. At Xeno, they approached coaching in a rather mechanistic way, emphasising the importance of accurate goal setting, which were rigidly adhered to in the coaching sessions. This is an approach that has been favoured in many of the coaching texts.

Goleman (2002) describes how he perceives 'the coach in action'

> What does coaching look like in a leader? Coaches help people identify their unique strengths and weaknesses, tying those to their personal and career aspirations. They encourage employees to establish long-term development goals, and help them to conceptualise a plan for reaching these goals, while being explicit about where the leader's responsibility lies, and what the employee's role will be….
>
> (Goleman:2002:60-61)

Even whilst I was talking about this to participants, I was aware that my own coaching style was very different. Goleman, as with other coaching writers, focuses very strongly on the need to coach to objectives. Although when I worked with people we would initially discuss objectives, we rarely referred back to them.

There is an assumption in much of the coaching literature that coaching is about achieving objectives or goals. Many of the writers on coaching assume that this is how sessions will be focussed. Zeuss and Skiffington (2002) give a very thorough description of the 'coaching cycle', part of which includes assessment and planning. They highlight the importance of agreeing goals.

> The coach and coachee now move from the general to the specific and work on establishing specific personal or organisational goals … goals should be clear and specific, … once the coach and coachee have established the goals and strategies of the alliance, most of the remaining sessions are devoted to reviewing the coachee's progress and addressing any obstacles or difficulties that may arise.
>
> (Zeuss & Skiffington:2002:77)

Clearly they assume that coaching is a rational, pre-planned process, which can be decided on in advance and is kept on track. However I suspect that many of these descriptions, do not echo the experiences of the people involved in the process. I have only had one client who brought a list of seventeen objectives to our final session, explaining how he had achieved them all. I had not seen them before.

> The need to establish purpose and direction is also important within each session. At the beginning of each session a good coach will want to set a target for the coachee…the coach can review progress… if the discussion is drifting.
>
> (Starr:2003:74)

Starr admits that, 'Sometimes, the coaching conversation that occurs seems unrelated to any of the coachee's goals, but a good coach chooses to continue' (ibid). Many excellent coaches will plan and agree objectives but when I talk to them (or spend time with them) it becomes clear that, despite this dominant discourse, peoples' experience is much more fluid.

Lee (2005) describes coaching as complex responsive processes of relating, it is more aligned with my experience.

> In my coaching, I focus on the patterns of power and the processes of relating in the immediate conversation. With my clients, I am more interested in what is occurring for us as we work together, instead of in agreeing goals and measurable outcomes to be achieved in other places. I concentrate much more on my participation in conversation, in its broadest sense as it occurs.
>
> (Lee:2005:168)

My work is much broader coaching, including advice, teaching and joint facilitation of meetings, nevertheless Lee's focus on 'my participation in conversation' (ibid) resonates more with my experience of working with clients than those of Goleman (2002), Starr (2003) and Zeuss and Skiffington (2002).

Harry as sponsor

At the beginning of the original project I realised that Harry was going to be one of my most important sponsors, gradually getting to know him very well. He involved himself in the work, contributing hugely to its success. He participated in several group sessions, being open with the groups about his own 'leadership journey'. The participants, who were unused to people in senior positions 'showing their vulnerabilities', were very impressed and from that moment they started to talk about 'feeling supported by the management'. During this period a new person (Jake) took over that sector of the bank and Harry was promoted. Eventually I was working with several of the top team. I remember feeling a little uncertain about the work I was doing with them; although they described me as their coach it was not just coaching. I asked Harry what he thought I offered. He said that he would describe me as 'an intelligent friend, who is a 100% on my side. There is no one else that I can ask advice of, or talk to about issues knowing that they don't have their own agenda. I know that you are completely on my side'. I was touched by this but concerned that I was making no difference. It was an interesting relationship, occasionally quite explosive. Harry is the only client with whom I have had a blazing row. However over time I felt that I was stuck in a recurring conversation with this senior group and told them that I thought it was time to stop working together. We discussed this and I withdrew.

Meeting Harry again

Harry and I met again after eighteen months and he asked if I would be willing to help him. In these earlier informal meetings, I had the impression that everything was in train for his next promotion. However he mentioned that Jake (his line manager) had been discussing Harry with the HR Director and the CEO, Jake had described him as a 'bit of a smoking volcano'. The HR director had said that this should be 'addressed within his Individual Development Plan (IDP)'. Jake had told Harry, who asked if I would help him to 'draft an objective'. He talked about the need to become more 'statesmanlike', a quality he saw as lacking when he lost his temper.

We started to meet informally over lunch and dinner. I was concerned at the lack of clarity. I wanted to know why we were meeting before I get involved again. Eventually I suggested

that we should decide whether or not to go ahead on a formal (billed) footing and he agreed that we should, meeting for a day once a month.

At our first official (paid for) meeting my first question was, 'why would you like to work with me again?' Harry told me that there were two issues. One concerned a major reorganisation in which he wanted to get promotion, the second related to his recent review where he had been allocated a grading indicating that he may be promoted, but not within the next year. He had also been told that he had not 'exceeded expectations' with regard to his previous annual targets. This was based on a new review system and was part of their appraisal process.

I notice that although I have written this conversation, as if, it was a straightforward planning meeting; that was not my experience. I remember feeling very anxious about starting out with Harry again, and uncertain about 'agreeing these objectives'. As I continue to think about working to objectives, I notice a level of uncertainty about what this means. Joas' view of planning resonates with my own experience.

> Even if plans have been drawn up, the concrete course, which the action takes has to be determined constructively from situation to situation and is open to continuous revision. As a consequence even in the case of individual action the concrete course taken by the action can never be fully traced back to some specific intentions. These may have been the decisive factor behind the particular plan, but they certainly do not determine the actual course the action takes.
>
> (Joas:1996:162)

This resonates with my experience of working with Harry (and other clients), nevertheless it is not how the organisational review process is described.

The Nine Box Model

This model was developed after the bank's CEO had raised the issue of the needs of 'a high performing organisation', to develop 'their existing talent'. The 'HR department' were tasked with developing a new appraisal process, which they based on the work of Charan, Drotter

and Noel (2001), they claim that there are not enough suitable people to fill 'an excess of leadership jobs', which has resulted in 'organisations' employing senior executives from other companies.

They argue that this dearth of leaders is a function of leadership development.

> The leadership pipeline is inadequate. Internal training, mentoring, and other developmental programmes aren't keeping the pipeline full, making it necessary to look outside. Everyone is fighting over a relatively small group of stars that, even when successfully recruited, tend to move from company to company with alacrity. What is needed, therefore, is an approach that will allow organisations to keep their own leadership pipelines full and flowing…. We've found, however, that an approach that takes into account the different requirements at distinct leadership levels is viable.

(Charan et al:2001:1)

The authors define the leadership pipeline as a progression of leadership skills, in which each step is required and developmental. They argue that everyone, in order to reach a senior level, needs to go through several 'leadership turns'. This means that at each level new skills are required and new demands are made. They suggest that without going through each step of this process people will fail.

> A CEO who has skipped one or more passages [leadership turns] can diminish the performance of managers who not only report direct to him but individuals all the way down the line. They not only fail to develop other managers effectively, they also don't fulfil the responsibilities that come with this position.

(Charan et al:2001:25)

The figure below gives a brief overview of the passages required to become a successful senior executive.

The leadership pipeline

Passages	Requisite skills
Managing Self to Managing Others	Planning work, filling jobs assigning work, motivating others, coaching and measuring others work.
From Managing Others to Managing Managers	Selecting people to turn from passage one (Managing Self to Managing Others), assigning managerial and leadership work to them, measuring their progress as managers, and coaching them.
From Managing Managers to Functional Managers	Communication through two layers of management, developing skills to manage outside own area of expertise. To become a proficient strategist.
From Functional Manager to Business Manager	Develop a more strategic and cross team focus than previously. Responsible for integrating functions across teams. Looking at plans from a profit perspective.
From Business Manager to Group Manager	Valuing the success of all businesses. Proficient at evaluating strategy for capital allocation and deployment purposes. Development of Business Managers, portfolio strategy and assessing core capabilities.
From Group Manager to Enterprise Manager	Focussed on values rather than skills, people must be long term visionary thinkers, people need to re-invent their self concept as an enterprise manager.

Adapted from Charan, Drotter & Noel (2001)

I would challenge certain assumptions that underlie this work. Firstly that this hierarchy is 'real and true across all organisations', Charan et al (2001) have assumed that their 'typology of leadership' is an accurate interpretation of all organisational leadership development, as I wrote earlier Goleman (2002) has a completely different leadership typology, as do many others (Fullan, 2001, Levicki, 2002, Zohar and Marshall, 2000). Although it is not relevant to my present inquiry to examine the 'main' leadership approaches it seems useful to mention two models espoused in Xeno.

A book that was recently recommended to Harry by his 'talent mentor', described the type of person required to be a successful 'Group/Enterprise manager'. Kotter (1986), in characterising good General Managers, argues the need for a particular array of attributes and experiences including particular kinds of family background, personality type, education, career path, knowledge and relationships. It is clear from reading his book (a popular recommendation in Xeno) that his view is very different to Charan et al (2001). The first three of Kotter's attributes do not relate to a developmental process within leadership development. Indeed these attributes are a function of a manager's experience up to graduation.

> One could argue, based on the research reported here, that the admission is as important, if not more so, as the curriculum in the development of future generals managers……the characteristics of effective GM's probably begins to develop at birth. By the time they are ready for graduate schools at least fifteen of the twenty-five characteristics of effective GMs… are already identifiable. By the time they might apply to an executive education program (sic), the vast majority of these characteristics are already established.
>
> (Kotter:1986:144)

Although this book was discussed within Harry's talent group, no attention was drawn to the completely different assumptions, which underpin their appraisal and review process.

When I ran the two leadership projects at Xeno, described in Project One, my theoretical underpinning was also very different. Both of these projects were deemed highly successful and yet I was influenced by a very different tradition than either Charan et al, or Kotter; I was heavily influenced by Tracy Goss (1996), who consider that leadership development is limited

by each individual's' 'winning strategy'. This term describes a set of opinions about our talents/skills, which we developed throughout our early life; these 'interpretations' inform our behaviour, which in turn makes us successful. Thus the 'winning strategy' is what has, so far, allowed success. However this 'winning strategy' will, at some point, stop us developing our leadership. She argues that in order to grow as leaders we need to develop a 'possibility'; something that we are working towards, that allows us to do more than we would achieve with winning strategy alone. At no time was this challenged even when a participant helped to develop the appraisal process. Goss (1996) assumes that we have an innate potential, underpinned by a formative view of humanity. She hypothesises that facilitating leadership is about releasing and building "potential".

In Xeno the adoption of the Leadership Pipeline has resulted in a very structured approach to career progression and the appraisal process. This approach has also been used to determine whether or not people will get promotion, there is even a level of assumed prediction

The Affect on Appraisal in Xeno

This work of Charan et al (2001) has been developed as a review process, whereby people are assessed with regard to their likelihood of promotion. At each review meeting line managers discuss with individuals how they will be allocated into a nine-box matrix. This is done at least twice a year and linked with a set of competences brought together in an extensive balanced scorecard. People are scored on competences such as restless curiosity, leadership, team development etc. They are allocated scores and told which category reflects their performance. Below is a figure used in Xeno.

The Nine Box Matrix

Technical C	Leadership turn possible B	Leadership turn twelve months A
Exceeded expectations 1	Exceeded expectations 1	Exceeded expectations 1
Met expectations 2	Met expectations 2	Met expectations 2
Expectations partially achieved 3	Expectations partially achieved 3	New to role. 3

Individuals in section C are deemed only 'promotable' for their technical expertise; this means that they are unlikely to go beyond the 'leadership turn, Managing Managers' (Charan et al, 2001). Thus they have limited promotion potential. Column B, 1 or 2 indicates the possibility of a leadership turn, e.g. From Functional Manager to Business Manager, within two years; Column A 1 or 2 indicates a leadership turn, within the next year.

This has caused a lot of problems in the organisation, with people being upset about position on the matrix. Harry regularly mentioned that he would be 'devastated' if he does not get a B1 by the end of the year. This view of development implies people are learning skills and competences, as if they are some 'thing' that people acquire. People are 'coached' by their managers who have already completed these management turns and in the coaching they are passing on their tacit knowledge.

> In this way of seeing things tacit knowledge is possessed by individuals and knowledge creation, at an organisational level, is the extraction of this already existing tacit knowledge from individuals to be spread across the organisation by a socialising process. This leads to a rather linear sequential view of individuals passing tacit knowledge to others, primarily through imitation, then formalising and codifying it so that it can be used. This emphasis on the individual as the origin of knowledge, allows Nonaka (1988) to reassert the organisation-wide intentional character of knowledge creation.
>
> (Griffin, Shaw & Stacey:1999:5)

They discuss Nonaka's view of (1988) 'organisational intention', which he defines as 'an organisation's aspirations to its goals. So it becomes clear that, for Nonaka, intention is a predetermined plan, which is not located in an individual but in an organisation, which has been reified as if an individual actor capable of a pre-formed private intention, although it could be argued that this is the assumption underlying the process at Xeno.

So far in this narrative I have mainly been considering the way in which the 'dominant discourses' talk about leadership development. There seems to be a strong thread running through the work that assumes the autonomy of individuals, and predictability of outcomes, which I will challenge. One could assume in reading this literature, that, as a consultant, I could formulate intentions independently, design the work, which will ensure these intentions

are fulfilled. I am beginning to explicate a view of intention that is much more interdependent and emergent.

Throughout the rest of this narrative I attempt to make sense of the way in which I work with clients, linking with some of the theories that have informed my practice in the past, and beginning to consider my consulting as complex responsive processes of relating.

Intention as purpose

I noticed in writing Project Two that, although I had enjoyed developing my thinking about intention as emergent, I was still left with many questions. In particular did my engagement with complex responsive processes thinking actually affect my practice? Any intense engagement with new ideas will have an impact on my work although at the moment I would be unable to pinpoint the difference. However I am beginning to make sense of my work differently through my inquiry.

In Project Two I considered the different meanings of intention, disagreeing with the idea of intention as a pre-determined plan. As my inquiry has emerged I have noticed that the notion of intention as purpose, has contributed to delineating my professional practice, whilst not contradicting intention as emergent and social. Searle (1983) develops the notion of Intention as a focus on 'something', suggesting that 'to' (as in towards) is inherent in its meaning. He claims that the notion of Intentionality is broader than what is usually meant when we talk about intentions or intending.

> ..intending and intentions are just one form of Intentionality among others, they have no special status. The obvious pun on "Intentionality" and "intention" suggest that intentions in the ordinary sense have some special role in the theory of Intentionality; but on my account intending to do something is just one form of Intentionality along with belief, hope, fear, desire, and lots of others; and I do not mean to suggest that because, for example, beliefs are Intentional they somehow contain the notion of intention or they intend something or someone who has a belief must thereby intend to do something about it. In order to keep this distinction completely clear I will capitalise the technical sense of "Intentional" and "Intentionality". *Intentionality is*

directedness; intending to do something is just one kind of Intentionality among others, (my italics).

(Searle:1983:3)

This seems to be in line with my initial thinking of intention as purposeful, which is helping me elucidate what my inquiry means to my professional practice. I have often reflected upon what it is I am 'actually doing' when working with clients, it feels ephemeral. One issue that I have been conscious of, but not explored, is the way in which, when coaching most successfully, I am immersed in the conversation and not focussed elsewhere. I am fully present, which I am comparing to Intention as focus.

> As a metaphor we can imagine that in free-flowing communicative action, we co-create qualities of responsiveness between us whereby we experience meaning on the move,... The significance of the past may be recast, a new sense of where to go from here materialises, there may be a shift in people's sense of self and in their relations to others, what can be envisaged takes on a fresh shape. The patterning of our social identities shifts spontaneously.

(Shaw:2002:68)

This passage exemplifies my 'moments of being' where I am most present and engaged with the conversation. I feel alert and a sense that all there is, is the conversation. This experience linking with the notion of 'Intention as toward' seems to elucidate my evolving sense of experiencing intention in the moment as a physically embodied, social, emergent phenomenon. It could be argued that in these moments I am experiencing a sense of 'shifting intention'.

Harry and the Leadership Pipeline

When Harry told me that he wished to work on improving his position in the nine-box model from B2 to B1. I had asked, why not A1? An interesting conversation emerged. I had believed that all was going very well at work but as soon as I asked, 'why not A1' Harry became very quiet. We were sitting in a café at the end of our first day together, and, as so often happens, the most important conversation happened at the end. When I asked why he

had become so quiet, he said 'I don't want to rush into thinking I could do that well, I want to take it a step at a time'. I was surprised and said to him,' why is it an issue to aim for the A column?' By this time he was looking away and I started to feel uncomfortable. I hesitated to continue and there was an uneasy silence. He turned away, I pointed this out noticing that I was feeling nervous, Harry can be very aggressive. I felt hot and queasy; a sensation that often occurs before I am about to say or do something that 'feels important'. This can result in a more free-flowing conversation, although not necessarily a comfortable one. I continued, asking again 'why is this an issue, why would you not be committed to going for a more immediate promotion?' He said that he felt uncomfortable with the idea of going for the A box, as he could not see himself being promoted that quickly. This was a recurring experience with Harry, when I touched on something fundamental he would withdraw. I responded to my sensation of discomfort, mentioning that he had become somewhat distant during this conversation, I felt anxious in pointing to something that I was experiencing in the moment but also sensed something creative could emerge. When I asked him why he was distant, he said, 'I feel uncomfortable at the idea of being pushed, and I am not sure whether I will be successful that quickly'. I respected Harry for his honesty and courage.

In the early part of the conversation, I was adopting a familiar approach to coaching (Morrison 2003), similar to a sports model of coaching, pushing people to aim for something bigger. Drawing attention to his behaviour felt risky, in those moments I do not plan. I had felt uncomfortable in this conversation and yet it emerged from the moment, and heightened my sense of being in the 'living present' (Griffin 2002). My experience of these moments is that the conversation proceeds unplanned but I do have a sense of purpose, the physiological feelings of heat and uncertainty often occur to me in conversations when I sense that there is something that I 'should, but don't want to say', (as with Sally in the previous project). I believe that, in some way, this is my experience of intention shifting and emerging in a social situation. In the conversation with Harry, from the interplay of gesture and response, (much of it non verbal), a new intention emerged.

I am reminded of a description of complexity theory included in Houchin and MacLean (2005).

> Although there are different complexity theory interpretations, a number of common concepts are observable. … sensitivity to initial condition, the presence of

disequilibrium and feedback processes, all of which interact to produce novel forms of order.

<div align="right">(Houchin & MacLean:2005:151)</div>

I had definitely felt sensitive and in the 'presence of disequilibrium' (ibid). I experience these moments vividly; an emerging intention, where I feel an 'imperative to speak'. In these moments, experienced as sharp and memorable, I am very aware of being in the living present. I ask myself is it happening to me or am I driving it; or conversely is it, paradoxically, both happening to me and being driven by me? It resonates with emergence and self-organisation as discussed by Stacey.

> The whole is not designed or chosen in advance because it emerges in local interaction. Such emergence is in no way a matter of chance because what emerges is precisely because of what all the agents are doing *or not doing (my italics).* There is nothing mysterious about emergence.

<div align="right">(Stacey:2006:402)</div>

This seems to summarise my experience in moments such as these. I am struggling to make sense of my coaching, which I would suggest relates to my shifting sense of teleology. This section also highlights the embodied experience of emerging intention, as Burkitt (1999) says,

> The body could be said to be a thinking body and to have intentionality prior to the emergence of language and self-consciousness. The body reaching out to grasp an object is one of the basic forms of intentional action and no cognitive representation is needed for such performances. Thinking and intentional activity are therefore pre-linguistic and pre-cognitive, and prior to the self-conscious subject there exists the bodily subject which is its foundation.

<div align="right">(Burkitt:1999:75)</div>

In this way Burkitt (1999) emphasises the body as the focus for a consideration of intention.

Human beings are fundamentally social

Joas' (1996) critiques Talcott Parsons in his exploration of sociologists interested in action and creativity, whilst he acknowledges that Parsons provided a basis for the milieu of his view of action.

Van Krieken (1998) describes Elias' issues around some of this work saying,

> Elias made two points about Parsons (*Talcott Parsons*) and through them sociology more broadly. …'Why put "actions" in the centre of society' said Elias 'and not the people who act? If anything societies are networks of human beings in the round, not a medley of disembodied actions.
>
> (Van Krieken:1998:45)

This is a fair challenge but I believe that Joas has overcome this issue by clearly locating his theory of creative action in the notion of interdependence and physical embodiment, (his inclusion of emergence also implies the presence of human beings rather than actions).

Joas starts by arguing against the notion of rational action, either utilitarian or normative

> They (*theories of action)* make at least three assumptions. They presuppose firstly that the actor is capable of purposive action, secondly that he has control over his own body, and thirdly that he is autonomous vis-à-vis his fellow human beings and environment.
>
> (Joas:1996:147)

In questioning this approach Joas argues that despite its 'empirical usefulness' it is not robust enough to be applied to all fields of study. Instead he provides 'an analysis of the intentional character of human action, the specific corporeality and the primary sociality of all human capacity for action' p.148. He argues against the teleological view of action, challenging this view of human beings as being 'cognizing subjects', reflecting upon the world and then 'acting'. This suggests actors standing back and thinking, followed by actions in the world, giving an episodic and punctuated notion of intermittent action and thought. Thus the rational human being chooses a goal, and then acts upon it. Joas continues,

concealed behind the notion … an act of goal setting must precede action, is the assumption that human cognition is independent of action or that it could and should be made independent of action. The teleological interpretation of the intentionality of action necessarily implies that cognition is divorced from action.

(Joas:1996:156)

He continues to argue against this Cartesian duality, highlighting the mediating importance of the 'human organism and its context'. He questions the body as purely instrumental. Joas is not arguing against the notion of purposeful action he considers that,

According to this alternative view, goal setting does not take place by an act of the intellect prior to the actual action, but is instead the result of a reflection on aspirations and tendencies that are pre-reflective and have already always been operative. In this act of reflection, we thematise aspirations, which are normally at work without our being aware of them. But where are these aspirations located? They are located in our bodies.

(Joas:1996:158)

Thus in my experiences with the meeting where I 'got the project', I had felt hot, nauseous and angry. There were others present with different biographies, also aware of their bodies and the context; bringing aspirations and intentions to the meeting. However something emerged from the meeting that was not an act of any one person's 'intellect prior to the actual action'.

As Stacey (2006) says

All anyone can do, however powerful, is engage intentionally, and as skilfully as possible, in local interaction, dealing with the consequences as they emerge.

(Stacey:2006:405)

I had a similar experience when I spoke to Harry about his unwillingness to 'aim for A1'; a sense of anxiety, not wanting to speak, experienced as a strong emotion or bodily sensation. I was not clear about what I was going to say, he had turned away and I felt stuck, but something in my body and his gesture called forth my response, which led to a more interesting, free-flowing conversation.

It is the body's capabilities, habits and ways of relating to the environment, which form the background to all conscious goal setting, in other words, to our intentionality. Intentionality itself, then, consists in a self-reflective control, which we exercise over our current behaviour.

(Joas:1996:158)

Joas discusses how creativity is a type of action that emerges as a result of a moment of interruption to habitual behaviour. So in those consultant-client conversations, when something purposeful and free flowing emerges, the interruption to pre-reflective behaviour is signalled corporeally and described as an emotion, e.g. anxiety, embarrassment, anger.

Finally Joas turns to Mead to add the third piece to his consideration of intention and creative action. He refers to the importance of sociality in his hypothesis discussing Mead's argument against an individualistic concept of social action. Hence challenging the 'unreflected assumption that the self-interested, autonomous individual is the natural starting point of all social theory' (ibid p184). Indeed as Mead (1934) describes,

we are not … building up the behaviour of the social group in terms of the behaviour of the separate individuals composing it; rather we are starting out with a given social whole of complex group activity...we attempt … to explain the conduct of the individual in terms of the organised conduct of the social group, rather than to account for the organised conduct of the social group in terms of the conduct of separate individuals…

(Mead:1934:7)

Joas discusses Mead's view of role playing, highlighting the focus that Mead has on identity formation through our capacity to take on the role of others. This also provokes my desire to continue this evolving sense making of my professional practice.

I would like to explore my experience of two meetings, which illustrate the impact of interruptions to my habitual behaviour, thereby explicating Joas' work regarding intention. In addition, showing how my experience of this relates to experiencing strong emotions.

Meetings with George and Harry

I went to meet George again recently to 'sell him another project'. My partner, Martin, took me to the station. As I sat in the car I complained to him about the meeting with George. 'I don't want to go; it will be a complete waste of time. Mia (my contact) has already said he has no budget and he thinks I am going repeat the last project. I have been involved in this kind of work for years…and he wants me to do ad hoc coaching, well I won't…' Martin waited patiently for the rant to stop (several minutes) and then said, 'Why don't you tell him how you feel?' I realised that I needed to have this conversation with George. Although at the time it seemed like a 'reasonable decision arrived at by a rational human being' in writing this narrative a different sense has emerged. As Griffin, Shaw and Stacey (1999) highlight, we are not always clear about our reasons for responding to situations

> Of course gut feelings can be a rationalisation or a defence, (this is a reference to psycho-analytic interpretations), but it need not always be so. Gut feeling and intuition are also creative ways of responding when it is not possible to give a rational articulation because of the level of uncertainty.
>
> (Griffin, Shaw & Stacey:1999:2)

So why was I so angry with George? Since our original meeting we had done lots of work together and I had become very fond of him. Having reflecting on this experience over a period of time I believe that my espoused concern that regarding a protracted process of negotiation was not the main reason for my upset. My anger had little to do with George. I had been involved in a very frightening road accident not long before, and had broken my foot. I was still having flashbacks of flying across a road and believing I was about to die. I was very anxious about going to London, it would be my second visit since the accident and I still felt very vulnerable, this high level of anxiety was affecting how I was behaving.

As George and I met I started to feel hot and sick. I was torn by the conflict between wanting this project and to tell him about my concerns. I was expecting an awkward conversation. I said, ' I think that we need to get clear on a few things'. George agreed and my pulse rate went up. We discussed my concerns, the lack of budget, and his concern that I would be 'covering old ground', as the conversation emerged I became less anxious. I told George that I had been hurt that he thought I was likely to repeat the old project, under a new title. He was

very courteous and praised my previous work. He said that he would find the money. The project was agreed.

I include this story to contrast it with a recent meeting with Harry. We were getting together for our monthly meeting. We talked again about how his team meetings were often dyadic in nature. We had agreed a six-monthly review of our work; I mentioned some of his previous concerns. He had achieved his 'B1' and felt that he did not have an issue with aggression any longer. He had been told that he might be offered a new job, which would be the last step before promotion. It could be argued that this was part of our original intention and it had been achieved and yet my experience of this day was stale and unsatisfying. He suggested that we did another three days, before reviewing our relationship again. Originally we had talked about doing more days. I felt silenced and stuck in this conversation.

Usually he wants to rush home fairly quickly on this occasion he wanted to continue talking. I suggested that we went for a coffee, maybe movement would help my feeling of being stuck. As we were sitting in a café, I noticed again how tired I was and how much I wanted to go home.

Quinn & Dutton (2005) talk about energy in conversations.

> …the energy that people generate and deplete in their efforts to coordinate affects both how conversations unfold and the effort that people devote to coordinated activities – a model of coordination as energy-in-conversation.
>
> (Quinn & Dutton:2005:37)

From a complex responsive processes model of thinking one could critique Quinn and Dutton for their focus on individual responsibility in generating 'energy-in-conversation', however they are moving towards a more social view with their emphasis on a model of coordination. Thus despite the individualistic assumption of responsibility, there is an acknowledgement of the importance of interdependence. In my conversation with Harry I felt this energy was lacking. What was not being co-created? What was missing in this conversation? On reflection it felt like a lack of engagement. I had written in my notes for that day, 'it is 3.50 I am becoming unconscious, bored witless'.

As we parted I mentioned that one of his colleagues wished to meet me. He became very angry, saying 'I don't want you working with anyone else in Jake's team.' As I did not want the project, (and probably because I wanted to get away from the situation) I reassured him and left. I was surprised by his reaction. I felt that I had been 'useless' and had not contributed, on this day I felt like I was 'stuck' I felt unhappy and dissatisfied with my contribution.

Of course this is my story, and at the moment I feel vulnerable about discussing the incidents with them.

> People can tell stories from the point of view of any person or object in a narrative, meaning that there are at least as many potential subjects and narratives as these are members of an organisation. However, because people tend to focus on only one subject at a time as they 'tell' stories *(from their own perspective – my inclusion)* … the other characters ... have to submit themselves to subordinate positions
>
> (Quinn & Dutton:2005:43)

It is interesting to notice my reticence it could be argued that they both had the power, as they were both employing me, but with George my strongly embodied experience emerged as an imperative to speak, with Harry my stuck, bored experience did not.

Concluding remarks

One of the themes that have emerged in writing this project is the evolving connection throughout my narrative between strong emotions, embodiment and emerging intentions. One of my interests in writing this narrative has been related to exploring the moment in which intentions emerge. I am still making sense of this in my work. In the examples where I examine emerging intentions there seems to be an 'arresting moment', physiologically embodied, which I perceive as a strong emotion; anger, anxiety, excitement, upset that I experience as a shifting intention and I do something different. If I think about the two experiences with Harry and George, it seems that my conversation with George was purposeful, one could argue intentional, whereas my experience with Harry was not.

In his work on leadership (Taylor, 2005) talks about his experience of leadership in a way that resonates with how I am making sense of my practice as a consultant. He shows clearly how conversations emerge and patterns evolve, some of which are familiar, nevertheless novelty occurs. In the most recent conversation with Harry, I felt stuck in a repetitive pattern of behaviour. When going to my meeting with George I expressed my concern that I was re-engaging in a 'stuck' pattern of conversation but as I 'ranted' about this with Martin a new intention emerged, which evolved in the conversation with George.

This seems to suggest that I made an independent decision to behave differently with George; this was not my experience. Joas (1996) argues that

> An alternative understanding of goal setting is therefore compelled to conceive of intentionality no longer as a non-corporeal, purely intellectual faculty. The means-ends schema cannot be overcome until we recognise that the practical mediacy of the human organism and its situations precede all conscious goal setting. A consideration of the concept of purpose must ineluctably involve taking account of the corporeality of human action and its creativity.
>
> (Joas:1996:158)

It is interesting to note the connection here, not noted by Joas, with the work of Searle on Intentionality. There is a sense in which both authors refer to purpose. Joas (1996) as he does here and Searle in his focus on Intentionality as a 'toward' phenomenon. In my discussion of intention one of the question is what, if any, role do I play in those moments. How am I acting in the 'living present' and what is the 'interruption of habitual action' that sparks a physically embodied response, (within any participant), to a social situation in which intentions evolve.

Taylor (2005) talks about the role of power in conversation.

> I seem to see my identity greatly influenced by my sense of the power relations existing between myself and the others in the group. Elias explained power as about dependency … those upon whom we have more dependency than they on us have power over us. Elias recognised that power is a 'structural characteristic of a relationship, all-pervading and, as a structural characteristic, neither good nor bad. It may be both
>
> (Taylor:2005:139)

It is often assumed that, as a consultant, I am always more dependent on my clients that they are on me (clients have been very surprised when I have suggested that we stop our work together). This is not my experience. As this narrative indicates I experience an ebb and flow of dependency on my clients.

Elias highlights this emphasis on the ebb and flow of power when he talks about figurations.

> This means that figurations are always organised around power. "At the core of changing figurations – indeed the very hub of the figuration process – is a fluctuating, tensile equilibrium, a balance of power moving to and fro, inclining first to one side and then to the other. This kind of fluctuating balance of power is a structural characteristic of the flow of every figuration".
>
> (Van Krieken:1998:57)

Thus in the meetings where I 'sold the project' a new patterning of conversations emerged. I had stopped being attached to an outcome, i.e. selling the project. I was focussed on my feeling of anger or anxiety and it seemed 'impossible not to do something different'. This highlights one of my emerging themes, given my developing understanding of the socially co-created nature of my work 'what is my contribution to conversations whether stuck or free flowing?' If I accept Elias' rejection of *Homo Clausus,* independent and autonomous, in favour of *Homines aperti,* interdependent and social, what does this imply for the social, emergent, interdependent nature of intention. What, if any, impact am I having on any of these interactions? Elias' work is different to many earlier sociologists in his unwillingness to dichotomise sociology and psychology. He was exposed to the work of Freud early in his career and is clear that individuals are interdependent. So although he argues against the notion of human beings as independent, he does not see them as unthinking victims of their own 'socialisation'.

Elias saw social life as both 'firm' and 'elastic'

> Within it scope for individual decision constantly arises. Opportunities appear that can either be ceased or missed. Crossroads appear at which people must choose, and on their

choices, depending on their social position, may depend either their personal fate, or that of their whole family...

<div align="right">(Elias:1991:49)</div>

Elias is focussing on the possibility of choice; hence an intentional act is a tactical grasping of opportunities. This starts to illuminate a possible way of describing my role in those moments where it seems that I participate in a living moment, in which novelty occurs as in the conversation with George, where my experience was that in the moment something shifted and 'we agreed on taking the project forward.

> Elias continually reveals how individuals and groups nearly always have some choice, and are rarely entirely dominated within any power balance. Figurations are open, not pre-determined. Furthermore, an Eliasian analysis does not engender a passive view of the subject.

<div align="right">(Dopson:2001:530)</div>

Thus Elias' opens a way for me to make sense of having choices and agency in working as a leadership consultant.

Conclusion

Several themes have started to emerge in writing this narrative; including power, choice and my professional practice. I continue to elucidate intention as an emergent, social and embodied phenomenon attempting to develop this within the context of my own practice. I have described my experience of creative action as an intentional, purposeful experience, which seems to occur as part of an event involving strong emotions. I have also described events where the conversations feel arid and stuck.

I have described a variety of consultant –client relationships linking this with my emerging inquiry. In doing this I am making sense of my professional practice within the context of complex responsive processes thinking. I have included detailed descriptions of moments in which intentions evolve thus providing a basis for developing a new way of describing 'leadership development' and how that impacts on my, and others, consulting practice. I have considered the way in which emotions, particularly emotional intelligence is currently

perceived. Finally I have examined the approach to the review process adopted within Xeno, and compared it to my experience of leadership development.

Several themes are emerging as crucial to my thinking about intention both theoretically and with regard to my organisational work. In particular how choice, power and emotion are an evolving aspect of my inquiry into interdependent intention. Elias' work continues to inspire my developing understanding of my professional practice, acknowledging the importance of the social, and furthering my reflections on emergent intentions, choice and agency.

In this project I have begun to make sense of my professional practice as a leadership consultant, in a way that highlights the differences, as well as the similarities, with the dominant discourse on leadership development. I am aware that there are still areas that will need to be further developed, in my future research I intend to continue to develop a description of my professional practice, which will provide a contribution to literature and professional practice.

Reflections on Project Three

It was throughout this project that I started to focus on emotion and the corporeal sense of emerging intention. In addition I deepened my understanding of the connection between moments of emerging intention and evolving power relations.

The narrative focussed on a relationship with a client who could be very aggressive. This raised some interesting issues for me, which I do not consider fully in my narratives, although I admit that he is the only client with whom I have ever had a heated argument. The nature of the relationship was ideal for understanding how emotion, experienced through a physical mediacy, was an important aspect of my work. It had a profound impact on how I started to practice, facilitating my awareness of my own and others' bodily sensations and strong emotions. I thought it was a problem for me, not other 'proper' consultants. It is an area overlooked in much of the prevailing consulting literature.

I considered the relationship between emergent intentions and emotion within the context of my practice, without always being clear about how I viewed the experience. I still felt slightly embarrassed at my behaviour when I lost my temper with him, still expecting a level of detachment that I now see as unrealistic, and not necessarily useful. In detailing those moments where intentions emerged, I was helped to understand the relevance of Burkitt's (1999) 'thinking and communicating body', which continues to pattern my practice.

It was in writing this project that I started to accept that evolving intentions impacted on how we plan. I drew upon the work of Stacey (2003,2005) and Joas (1996) to consider how planning is also an emergent phenomenon that did not require a linear teleological explanation. This realisation was emerging whilst working in a highly structured organisational environment.

In my reflections upon this project I was exercised by the contrast between our, somewhat ad hoc conversations and the highly sequential, structured leadership development approach

(Charan et al, 2001), espoused in his organisation. I realise that I have disagreed with this neat, pre-determined view of human development for many years, but in pursuing this inquiry I have developed my theoretical background in which I make sense of my unease. I critiqued the work of Goleman on emotional intelligence and leadership (1996, 2002, 2003), which was also popular in the organisation, and in so doing clarified how my thinking had moved away from this independent autonomous view of emotion, comparing this with my experience of emotions and emerging intentions, which I connected with Elias' (1970) work on figuration and emotion.

There is also a reiteration of my concern with identity; I was not sure what to call myself. I continue to describe my expertise in terms of leadership development, I asked clients not to introduce me as their coach but introduce me as a leadership consultant. I was still talking about my uncertainty regarding professional practice. However it was not until after the progression viva, (as discussed in the synopsis), that I realised that identity formation was key to my continuing inquiry. I also made the connection with evolving power relations.

Project Four

The Experience of Being Changed Through Consulting

Introduction

In this project I consider my professional practice as a management consultant, with reference to several organisational narratives. I consider the prevailing literature in order to answer my questions, 'what am I doing in my practice?' and 'what does this mean for my "self"?' In other words I am considering the interplay between my work as a consultant, my theoretical understanding of complex responsive processes thinking, and what that means for how I view my identity. In answering these questions I intend to offer a contribution to both theory and fellow practitioners.

I examine how power relations pattern conversations, formulating an explanation for how this impacts on identity formation, and examining my experience to further exemplify this process. I consider the work of Elias, in particular his discussion about the enabling-constraining nature of relationship, to consider an overlooked aspect of consultancy, identity formation. I compare the notion of self as understood by Mead and Elias, with other sociologists and some management theorists.

Consultancy and Identity formation

The participants and the organisation

The narratives in this project are based on a piece of work, which is part of a six-month project in Xeno (a large retail bank). I have worked with Xeno intermittently for several years and they are one of my major clients. This inquiry examines several organisational incidents related to this work. My work forms part of their 'Leadership Development Programme', (LDP). I had been engaged to do the work by George, (who I discuss in Project Three) and Mia, who had been a participant on a previous programme. Mia had recently become, 'Head of Leadership Development'. The delegates and focus of the work were chosen as a result of an appraisal or development process, whereby people were marked against a series of

leadership competences, (there is an in-depth discussion of the process in Project Three). All of the managers were graded on these competences and the top five percent were invited to join the LDP. From this cohort a smaller group of the more senior managers, were chosen to participate in our programme.

Mia and I designed the course together, although we contributed in different ways. Mia talked with participants within their daily work, whilst I ran the group sessions and worked individually with the participants. She had asked that, throughout the programme, we focus on 'Group Responsibility', which was the 'lowest scoring competence', on the most recent 'LDP review report'. The final group consisted of six people who had been distinguished through this process as, 'potential future leaders'. They are all reasonably senior, in line management terms they are, 'four below the Chief Executive', in an organisation employing 70,000 people.

The programme included three different elements; group sessions involving discussions about different areas of leadership, ten one-to-one sessions where they can discuss individual issues and one work place visit. Mia and I had agreed to ask participants to read a book, before each session, in order to encourage them to be more critical about leadership approaches. As I discussed in Project Three, there had been many different leadership approaches espoused over my time at Xeno and we were hoping to encourage them to adopt a more critical perspective to leadership. Having reflected on this incident, I can see how this had evolved as a function of my involvement with the doctoral process. Through my inquiry, I have become critical of many of the leadership approaches that previously had informed my work. I had discussed this with Mia, and in our discussions about the project, it had evolved as a significant organising theme.

Identity as emergent

Previously my inquiry has focussed on the emergent nature of intention and what this implied for my professional practice. Before pursing the doctoral programme, I would have described myself as a consultant who was knowledgeable in the field of leadership and could help others develop their leadership skills. As my thinking has shifted I have started to reconsider the nature of my work. In particular, given the interdependence of human beings, how can I be 'apart from and unaffected by' working with clients. Often traditional consultancy writers conceptualise their consulting as an activity that is done 'to' clients, and there is rarely any

reference to the impact on the consultants' or clients' identity. I intend to challenge both of these assumptions, using a narrative inquiry to elucidate my thinking and critique relevant theory.

I have been influenced throughout my inquiry by Joas (1996) who, in his discussion about intention (and action), challenges some assumptions fundamental to much of the work on management consultancy.

> Theories to date have not questioned … that the intentionality of action is teleological in nature and that the actor is able to make instrumental use of his body.
>
> (Joas:1996:184)

My previous work has discussed Joas' challenge, elucidating his critique of the 'self-interested, autonomous individual', through narrative inquiries illuminated by organisational incidents. I have shown in the discussion of my work that the practice of consultancy does not have to be rooted in 'the possessive individualism of the western culture,' (ibid). The focus in much of the management literature is on independent and autonomous consultants, with little reference to the embodied nature of the consultative process. Even in the more 'collaborative approaches' there is a sense that the consultant is leading the work. I am positing that given the interdependent and social nature of human beings, in working with clients, our identities are forming and being formed. My identity is evolving through engaging with the doctoral process, reading the literature and in pursuing my inquiry. I am making assumptions about identity, which I will expound throughout the piece. I have included a brief overview.

Identity is a process, which is
- Emergent
- Interdependent, yet distinguishable (one from another)
- Paradoxically both recognisable and novel
- Both continuous and containing the possibility for transformation in interaction
- Emerging in particular, through shifting power relations and provocative or traumatic events.

Throughout this project I appraise my experience, as a consultant, and examine how Mead's (1934) notion of a reflexive, social self has facilitated a new way of understanding my

professional practice. I distinguish the implications for both the academy and other practitioners.

I have chosen several narratives, which exemplify the key themes that have evolved throughout my inquiry. Given the social nature of human beings, I have distinguished consultancy as an interdependent patterning of conversations whereby identity formation can and does occur, particularly in moments of evolving power relations. I have also focussed on the clients, as individuals participating in these conversations, rather than on the organisation as a reified monolith.

Mia and I had chosen books for discussion in each of the sessions, (the group chose the book for the final session). We wanted to pick differing texts on leadership to allow the group to get a sense of the variety of leadership literature. Generally we chose books that espoused divergent views in order to challenge the orthodoxy, and encourage the participants to be more critical in their approach to perceived 'intellectual definitions of leadership', (as one of the participants described it).

Identity and self, a brief introduction

I have included a brief overview of the relevant research on identity before discussing identity formation in consultant-client relationships. This is a significant and growing field, hence, this overview will be biased and brief. My main focus will be on sociological and management distinctions, thereby ignoring much psychological work. I will continue this discussion throughout this project.

Mead (1934) argues that the self is intrinsically social, emerging through individual's social interaction.

> The individual experiences himself as such, not directly, but only indirectly, from the particular standpoints of other individual members of the same social group, or from the generalised standpoint of the social group as a whole to which he belongs. For he enters his own experience as a self or individual, not directly or immediately, not by becoming a subject to himself, but only in so far as first becomes an object to

himself… and he becomes an object to himself only by taking the attitudes of other individuals towards himself within a social environment….

(Mead:1934:138)

Mead posits that we see ourselves as 'objects to ourselves' through the medium of communication. He demonstrates the importance of role taking in our identity formation.

the self is something, which has a development; it is not initially there, at birth, but arises in the process of social experience and activity, that is, develops in the given individual as a result of his relations to that process as a whole and to other individuals within that process.

(Mead:1934:135)

At some point we 'distinguish between the experience… and our own organisation of it into the experience of his self' (ibid, p.135). Obviously suggesting this is an ongoing process, thus postulating an emerging self.

Stets and Burke(2005) suggest that,

Because the self emerges in social interaction within the context of a complex, organised, differentiated society, it has been argued that the self must be complex, organised and differentiated as well … The overall self is organised into multiple parts (identities) each of which is tied to a social structure…

(Stets and Burke:2005:133)

Throughout the literature there is not a clear distinction between self and identity, I would challenge this connection between identity and Mead's components of the self

Stryker (1980), in his development of identity theory, described identity as meanings, applied to oneself in social situations, building on Mead's work with regard to defining oneself within interactions. Stryker developed the notion of identity in terms of salience and commitment, arguing that role identities are ranked according to a hierarchy of salience. He described the hierarchy as a 'readiness to act out an identity', for example if two people are given the choice of spending time with their colleagues, or with their horse, their choice will be based on the

importance they attach to their role as a colleague or equestrienne. Additionally commitment to social relationships will also affect identity salience. This can either be interactional commitment, i.e. the number of relationships linked to a given role identity, or affective commitment, i.e. the strength of links to others involved in the role identity.

Whilst McCall & Simmons (1978) agree that salience is essential in identity formation, they consider that the prominence of role identity is a function of its' reward value, hence to the intrinsic and extrinsic gratification of successfully performing the role. They argue that support for role identity is dependent on how favourably others respond, described as a 'hierarchy of prominence', which relates to the 'ideal self' (ibid, p. 74), continuing that 'a role identity is his imaginative view of himself *as he likes to think of himself being and acting'* (ibid, p. 75). McCall (2003) describes self-identification as an attempt to answer the question, 'who am I?' He builds on his earlier work by arguing that in order to answer this question we need to understand who I am not. In other words we understand the 'me', in terms of the 'not-me' pp 11-23.

Taylor (1989) focuses his view of identity within the context of 'who am I?' whilst relating it to 'what it is to be good'.

> My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose. In other words, it is the horizon within which I am capable of taking a stand … were they to lose this commitment or identification, they would be at sea, as it were; they wouldn't know anymore, for an important range of questions, what the significance of things was for them. And this situation does, of course, arise for some people. It's what we call an 'identity crisis'.
>
> (Taylor:1989:27)

The latter descriptions, whilst referring to identity formation tend to focus on the formed identity, hence seem static. Nevertheless they provide a context within which to consider identity issues, which will be discussed later.

A Conversation about Presence

In the third session we were discussing Presence (Senge et al 2005). We had chosen this book, as it was different to the more familiar management literature popular across the bank. The authors focus on environmental issues, and highlight the importance of remaining present, which they consider to be aware in each moment, both of others and of our 'interaction with the environment'. They discuss the prevalence of 'the voice of judgement' in their discussion of how to be more aware, or present to what is happening within conversation. I found the book interesting although disagreed with some of their fundamental assumptions. I will not provide further detail or critique, as it does not contribute to my inquiry.

People seemed particularly energised by reading this book, although responding very differently. Whilst some had really enjoyed it, others had found it challenging and esoteric. We conversed with more passion than on previous occasions. They focussed initially on how they had recognised the importance of being aware of our 'voice of judgement', particularly in relationship to their teams. Dick said that although he had struggled to read the book, he had found it very interesting, 'I like the way that the authors talk about a way of thinking that is very different to mine. As a banker I have developed my analytic knowledge, reading this has made me think more about my intuitive side'. Dee said, 'I really enjoyed the book but feel really embarrassed about how judgemental I am about my new team, boy does my voice of judgement have a running commentary about them. I also notice how often in my head I immediately move to problem solving and reason, I hardly ever reflect before acting'. Eddie added, 'I always feel the need to be logical and I believe I should put emotion to one side, this book made me see how stupid this is'. Dick also raised an issue that he and I had discussed but he had never brought to the group before. 'I noticed that my view of Enid, as too reflective, has been very short-sighted, I automatically think that she should react as quickly as I do, reading the book has made me think that maybe, as a team, we benefit from her more reflective style'.

There was a real excitement about this judgemental inner dialogue; a new theme was evolving whereby the group's discourse indicated a more consciously reflexive discussion of their leadership. This conversation, in which they reflected on themselves and each other in a more challenging way, patterned future sessions and meetings. In previous work I have felt that I was the main person 'challenging', whereas these participants were willing to do so with each

other. This resonates with my experience of the research process, whereby I am constantly challenged by colleagues and supervisors to consider my work more rigorously, which, as my work will distinguish, has patterned my conversations with these clients. We were, 'evoking and provoking responses from each other… creating their (*our*) reality, including their (*our*) very identity', Stacey, 2003, p. 316.

I mentioned Gladwell (2004) and his emphasis on intuition. Mia said, "I read it recently and found it really interesting. I noticed that I am willing to act on intuition when I feel confident". The participants talked about when they used intuition. Eddie said, "With risk and compliance I am confident and use my intuition all the time", Stan agreed saying that he felt the same about project management. Dee said, "Yes but how are you in other areas, I know I am much less willing to act on my intuition with regard to people management, and at the moment I am very cautious running the new centre". Eventually they agreed that they were much more likely to act on intuition in 'known-areas' than in areas where they feel less confident. This was interesting as it is in alignment with Gladwell's view, which had not been described.

The conversation flowed, despite some expressed difficulties about reading the book. It was the most polarised discussion that we'd had about a text. Whilst Dee and Eddie had found it fascinating and commented on the way in which the stories enhanced the content, Denis said, "I thought it was all a bit wacky". Mia said, "I found it challenging to read, and didn't finish it." We discussed how it would feel to be, 'more present as a banker in a heavily operational, process driven environment'. They decided it would be useful, although difficult. They stressed how they were always rushing, decisions had to be made quickly and judgements were based on numerical decisions. Dee said, 'we have to use quantitive measures but I feel there are aspects of my work that I find difficult to measure. How do I measure whether people in my centre appreciate how I work with them, compared to their previous boss? How do I know whether we are collaborating?'

We started talking about how we could show success in 'non-numerical' terms; they were giving examples of how they were always thinking in terms of measurables or numbers. Whilst they recognised that this metrical evaluation was vital, they said that they had started to feel constrained by this approach. They compared the usual banking metrics with the focus in the book, respecting the planet, wanting to make a difference to people's lives, attending to

the environment. They talked about how all of the success measures on their 'balanced score cards' were numerical. Dee talked about how many things that were important to her were not measurable in numerical terms, and therefore ignored. We considered how one could measure 'intangibles' like closer teams, more open communication and commitment across the organisation. The conversation was free flowing and all were participating.

An emerging aspect of my professional practice is including clients in critiquing the literature; I have never before approached the literature so systematically. Previously I have provided a suggested reading list and refer to books as apposite. Through my evolving professional practice I wanted to share my experience of doing the doctorate with them, challenging the participants, as I had been challenged. I am not claiming that I made a rational, autonomous decision, pre-planned agreed with Mia, rather, the theme evolved, patterning conversations and becoming an organising theme on this project. Thus my engagement with the doctorate had 'contributed ' to my identity formation and theirs, as one of them said, 'I used to read a book a year, and I've read six in three months'.

Through this organisational incident, I am elucidating the interdependent nature of identity formation in our conversations; mine with my doctoral group and clients, in the same way their interactions with others were evolving and patterning our conversations. This elucidates the process whereby our selves are emerging, particularly in moments of strong engagement, frequently experienced as a strong bodily sensation.

Power and Shame

Conversation with Joanne

At the end of the morning a member of the executive joined us. Joanne is a new member of the executive, (exec), and this was the first time that I had met her. Mia had emailed the group saying, 'Realistically we will have about 50 minutes with Joanne before lunch, given that, it would be good to have a conversation with Joanne in which you share your understanding of the programme so far; discuss our progress to date, and agree objectives for the remainder of the programme. We also need to discuss what support we can give to the Exec to enable them to support us in fulfilling this programme going forward.'

The email clearly indicated our plan to 'get support from the executive to ensure the continuation of the project'. We wanted to gain support from this person who we perceived as having 'power'. Given Joanne's role, as a member of the exec, we acted 'as if' Joanne had the 'power' to help us to continue with the next project. It is an example of a common misconception of power,

> Whether the power differences are large or small, balances of power are always present wherever there is functional interdependence between people. In this respect, simply to use the word 'power' is likely to mislead. We say that a person possesses power, as if power were a thing he carried around in his pocket.
>
> (Elias:1970:74)

As Joanne joined us, we fell silent, I noticed myself becoming still, feeling nervous and excited. I wanted her to see how well the project was going, to experience the energy and passion that had been present in the previous conversation. Several of the group had worked for Joanne, one still did. She appeared supremely confident. I thanked her for coming and invited her to join in the conversation. Mia and I had discussed how we wanted her to get a sense of the excitement and work of the group. Given our hope for funding for a second project we saw Joanne as a possible conduit to the exec, and the 'budget holders'. I had fantasised that the group would say what a great project, and Joanne would tell the exec, who would continue to fund it. This is somewhat of an oversimplification, but indicates a context for what then happened.

She introduced herself and started talking about her role. She mentioned that she had heard lots of good things about the programme and was interested in hearing more. She told us that she had been in a particularly boring meeting one day, and in watching participants go into this room (to meet with me), she had noticed that people seemed to come out energised. She was fascinated, wondering what might be happening. Nevertheless she did not ask us about our experience, despite her espoused interest, but kept talking about herself. None of the group spoke, I felt uneasy, wondering whether I should say anything. Eventually I asked her if she had any particular questions, she started to ask individuals what they had been 'doing in the project'. As people answered they were brief, Dee said, "It's been great, we have been talking about qualitative measures". Most people mentioned this, but in a way that was stilted,

they looked down, didn't go into detail, answered with one sentence. The conversation had changed, before her arrival we had been engaged in an energetic, free-flowing conversation, suddenly everyone sounded unsure, the passion seemed to dissipate, people responded with vague answers. Joanne looked puzzled and seemed unclear about how to respond.

She interrupted, as Dick was talking, asking how we intended to evaluate the project. Without giving us the opportunity to respond she made several suggestions, seeming to be unaware that we would have discussed this. I noticed myself beginning to feel angry and defensive, sitting there listening to 'this banker' suggesting how we could evaluate the programme. I could see that Mia had gone very still and rather 'stony-faced'. Later she told me how angry and patronised she had felt at Joanne's assumption that we had not discussed evaluation. I remained silent, stuck in my silent conversation, reiterating to myself, 'shall I speak, no the group should speak'. I have written in previous projects about my experience of emerging intentions; and how often I feel corporeally bound to communicate. On this occasion, I felt frozen, almost, 'corporeally bound not to speak', my body still, mirroring Mia's. At the time I was not sure whether it was due to Joanne's position, or my desire not to speak for the group. It felt like we had been invaded.

Dee spoke about her new role, saying, 'I have told myself that I have been observing my team. Since we have been discussing the voice of judgement, I realised that I have not observed, nor listened. I have been thinking about what I could change', (she had been doing the job for five weeks).

Suddenly Joanne leapt out of her seat and strode across the room. She said, 'I allocated ninety days to observe in my new job'. She picked up a pen and started drawing a 'process map' of the observation. She described how she had evaluated her colleagues on the exec. 'Nick was helpful, Larry (she laughed) well you know what he's like, and Harry, all he's interested in is "am I a threat to him", he is so ambitious, that is all he cares about'. The atmosphere in the room felt tense, we had talked about being open in our communication and this woman was gossiping about her colleagues. She was telling us things that she had not told them. I felt unsure of what to do, should I say something, I was angry that she was publicly criticising her colleagues in front of their staff. I felt my face redden and a lump in my throat, I was thinking her brash and self-absorbed, and particularly irritated by her 'gossiping' about Larry and Harry in this way.

Through this inquiry I have realised that my anger and vehement response to Joanne reflected my fear; I had expected her to be as enthusiastic as we were. Usually, when members of the 'exec' have been involved with my work, they have been impressed, which has led to more work. I felt threatened and was worried that she may not think the project was good. I started to wonder, how did I know if that the project was 'working' and what did that mean. I was concerned that it could 'fail' and that I may get no more work. I earn most of my income through Xeno. This woman could affect my livelihood.

It had been a long time since a senior manager from Xeno had challenged the likelihood of one of my projects being successful. In the conversation with Joanne I had experienced a sense of shame, thinking that maybe if 'they' evaluated the project it would be deemed a failure. I feared that I had lost my ability to do this work. In addition some of the members of the exec had changed. The power relationships were evolving, I was suddenly aware that my relationship with people holding the budget might have changed. I felt that I had become an outsider to the exec.

The established and the outsider

Elias and Scotson (1964) discussed how established groups stigmatise outsider groups as inferior and explore what this means for patterns of relating.

> Just as established groups, as a matter of course, regard their superior power as a sign of their higher human value, so outsider groups, as long as the power differential is great … emotionally experience their *power* inferiority as a sign of *human* inferiority.
>
> (Elias & Scotson:1965:xxvi)

Initially I had explained my response to Joanne in terms of her exclusion from our group, not considering how the group might perceive me. In pursuing this inquiry I have realised that my fear of exclusion from the exec, the 'budget holders', had triggered this sense of turmoil. My expressed concern about her gossiping, also related to fears about being excluded from the exec. Gossip is an important aspect of the way in which the 'established' expressed inclusion or exclusion from the 'established group'. Elias & Scotson (1965) showed how 'praise gossip' was a way of indicating inclusion in the group, and 'blame gossip' was a sign of exclusion. In

the past I have felt confident of my relationship with the exec and perhaps fantasised that I was an insider, rather than a 'respected outsider', suddenly this woman was making me question my position. I feared the new power figuration evolving in the exec, in her 'blame gossip' about Harry, a long-standing client, and 'praise gossip' about Nick, who I hardly knew. In this conversation I had moved from a sense of I/we identity, to a feeling of them/us with the exec. My sense of needing these people, in order to earn of living, resulted in a feeling of shame and anxiety.

In the meeting with Joanne my bodily sensations were expressed by stillness and silence, accompanied by feelings of terror and shame. In my fear of the new patterns of power relating in the exec, I experienced the 'shame of the outsider', feeling frozen by fear of exclusion.

> It is only when a transformation in this patterning occurs that new possibilities arise. Movements in patterns of power relating are experienced as sensations of exclusion and inclusion that configure as socially created identities. Such movement therefore, have a differentiating affect, where what is being differentiated is one identity from another. In our relating we co-create enabling constraints as self-organising, differentiating patterns of power that form and are being formed by our identities at the same time. A movement in these patterns therefore alters our experience of being included and excluded.
>
> (Lee:2005:167)

Through paying attention to processes of organisational power relationships, whilst noticing my emotional responses, I have developed new ways of relating with my clients, I have become aware that how participants may perceive my power relations with regard to the exec and considering how the group may perceive these patterns of power relating differently. It is senior staff that usually employ consultants (Nadler & Slywotzky, 2005) and it is easy to ignore the impact on the clients of the consultant's relationship with their leaders, and what that implies for the ebb and flow of power relationships. The consultancy literature rarely details the impact of consultancy on the identity of the consultant, or how that relates to inclusion and exclusion. This inquiry illuminates how my understanding of conversations with clients has been profoundly affected both by complex responsive processes thinking.

In inquiring into this one organisational experience I have elucidated how, not only my professional practice, but also my sense of self has been affected. My belief that empathy and 'unconditional regard' (see Project One) was a fundamental aspect of my professional practice has been challenged. In the early iterations about this experience I wrote about 'trying to empathise with Joanne and failing'. In developing this inquiry and highlighting the interdependent nature of human beings, I am seeing the notion of 'deliberately and consistently empathising', as nonsensical. During this session I noticed the ebb and flow of my sense of being an insider/outsider, I felt at times paradoxically both included and excluded.

Elias (1971) distinguishes power as, 'a structural characteristic of human relationships', p. 74. I have adopted a different theoretical perspective to consulting, highlighting the importance of evolving power relations in patterning conversations with clients. In detailing these conversations I am revealing the process of identity formation within consultant-client relationships.

In examining this incident I have distinguished my experience of identity formation, wherein a movement in a pattern of relating led to my sense of exclusion from a significant group (the exec), resulting in feelings of failure and shame. Through researching this moment, my sense of self is evolving. In considering the incident I have become aware of my need for recognition, my fear of losing clients, my concern about the perception of a senior person, therein re-evaluating both my professional practice and my 'self'. This is quite different from much of the mainstream consultancy literature, which focuses on the impact of the relationship on the client and rarely on the consultant's identity. I am illuminating how the consultative conversation is fundamentally co-created and social. This is rarely discussed in the prevailing consultancy literature, however in conversations with other consultants, both at academic conferences and through social contact, the social and relationship aspect of consulting is frequently mentioned.

The Emerging self

Elias argues that the self arises in social interaction, disputing the existence of the 'pure self', which he considers is located in the psychological domain.

In adopting a wider, dynamic viewpoint instead of a static one – that vision of an irreducible wall between one human being and all others, between one human being and all others, between inner and outer worlds, evaporates to be replaced by a vision of an incessant and irreducible intertwining of individual beings.

(Elias:1991:32)

Elias is arguing the fundamental interdependence of human beings, hence presupposing an emerging self.

Gergen (2000) argues that the self or identity is constantly in contact with new 'selves'. He criticises the prevailing static view of self, instead positing the notion of the 'saturated self', whereby we are constantly being inundated with visions of alternative selves. He avers that we are so surrounded by images of possible selves (through television, films) that we develop layers of selves. Gergen assumes this partly based on the increasingly available channels of communication, emails, mobile phones and the internet, whilst he does not convincingly expound the process of identity formation, he highlights the importance for consultants be aware of the malleability of identity

In describing the reflexive self Mead was arguing that human beings are unique in their capacity to become an object to one's self. Thus for Mead we are subject and object, the 'I' and the 'me'. As the self is emergent, there is no reason to assume a moment in which the identity becomes fixed and stops evolving; hence the self continues, to emerge. If we agree with Mead that the self is essentially a reflexive process of social interaction, this has broad implications for the practice of consultancy. I will critique the prevailing view of consultancy through an examination of the literature, and will contrast with examples from my own practice. This will indicate how identity formation is frequently overlooked; particularly with regard to the consultant.

Callero (2003) discusses Foucault's emphasis on power in formulating the self, using the notion of power in a way that differs from Elias (1970). Callero (2003) explains how Foucault's view of self is intrinsically about power. He quotes Foucault saying, 'the individual is not the vis-à-vis of power; it is one of its prime effects, (Foucault, 1994, p. 214). Callero (2003) continues,

> For Foucault, the self is the direct consequence of power and can only be apprehended in terms of historically specific systems of discourse. So-called regimes of power do not simply control a bounded, rational subject, but rather they bring the self into existence by imposing disciplinary practices on the body. Through the "technologies" of surveillance, measurement, assessment, and classification of the body; technocrats, specialists, therapists, physicians, teacher, and officers serve as vehicles of power in diverse institutional setting (prison, school, hospitals…
>
> (Callero:2003:117)

Foucault is arguing that 'regimes of power, brings the self into existence'. This could be conceptualised as a planned process whereby the 'institution is responsible for formulating the self'. This could be seen as a reification of these institutions, which seemingly act on people in a way that is planned and independent of those involved.

> From Foucault's perspective, the self is coerced into existence not to become an agent but as a mechanism of control where systems of discourse work from the inside out in creating a self-regulating subject.
>
> (Callero:2003:118)

Thus for Foucault, it could be argued that power relationships are endemic to certain 'political bodies', which serve as 'mechanisms of domination' that 'bring the self into existence by imposing disciplinary practices on the body'. Foucault's version of power, unlike Elias', is located in organisations that, in some way, seem to be able to 'act upon' people through access to their body.

However I would argue that Foucault is 'not reifying, but using a different language style' regarding institutions. It's therefore conceivable to compare Foucault's view on the bureaucratisation of power with Mead's social object, (Williams, 2006, personal correspondence).

It is useful to compare Foucault's thought with Mead's discussion of the social object,

> processes of communicative interaction and power relating between human bodies in which thematic patterns of relating emerge as individual-collective identity…. These

are generalised tendencies on the part of large numbers of people to act in similar ways in similar situations. They evolve in social interaction, forming that social interaction while being formed by it at the same time.

<div align="right">(Johannessen & Stacey:2005:142-143)</div>

In my work with the Xeno group I was aware of an individual-collective identity, at times feeling part of the established group, at others an outsider. This sense of being both included and excluded was particularly strong in my meeting with Joanne. I experienced an ebb and flow of dependence, which is how Elias conceptualises power (Elias, 1970), and I was aware of how power impacts self,

> Human beings, as individuals or as groups, are bound to each other in specific figurations whose dynamics have a constraining and compelling influence on those who form them.

<div align="right">(Elias:1987:79)</div>

This is a very different way of conceptualising the way in which groups, organisations and states form and are formed. Thus Elias elucidates how identities emerge interdependently with others, forming relationships that both constrain and enable. In my work I am participating with clients in co-creating novel conversations, by paying close attention in the living present I attend to conversations with an awareness of themes, whether emerging or 'stuck'. By acknowledging shifting power relations and the embodied interactions wherein new patterns of relating evolve, identities may form and be formed.

Serious playfulness; The day continues

As part of our commitment to encourage the group to be more critical I had produced an overview of various 'leadership gurus'. I explained that I had randomly picked five books on leadership from my bookshelves and produced an overview of each. Many of my clients at Xeno, even at senior level, are quite uncritical any management literature. I asked them to review these leadership styles. In many of our conversations clients had mentioned that they feel stupid. It seemed a good opportunity to risk a perceived intellectual debate within the group, something many of them feared. We critiqued the five views of leadership, comparing

them with their existing views. Dee suggested that we have a meeting, with a real topic, to improvise and exemplify some of their 'significant leadership qualities'. They wanted to play, whilst having something real to discuss. We considered possible topics and Dick suggested that we could discuss a qualitative approach to evaluating the course.

The meeting lasted about twenty minutes, and a new pattern of relating emerged, that was quite different to previous improvisations. They were attentive and involved; there was far more listening than usual. Dick was often aggressive in meetings and rarely listened. Although individually pleasant and friendly, he changed in a 'meeting environment' from a 'jovial chap', to a ruthless, insensitive bully, (even when improvising). At his team meeting, when I participated, he interjected constantly and rarely listened to his colleagues. We had discussed this, and he said he would like to listen and enquire. On this occasion he was quite different, listening for ten minutes, adding a couple of supportive remarks to his colleagues, and never interrupting.

Throughout the meeting I sensed a group of people working together, collaborating and supporting. A new pattern was emerging, instead of arguing from a particular perspective, trying to persuade, even bully others, they were listening to each other. They agreed with some views, building on what each of them was saying, disagreements were thoroughly discussed, rather than ignored. Within fifteen minutes the group had agreed that they would evaluate the programme, by picking a problem that was seemingly intractable, (had been endlessly discussed and been around for a long time), and would, as a group, find a resolution.

Afterwards we discussed the experience. Dick said, 'It felt like a real meeting and yet I was really listening to other people, I didn't feel the need to speak all the time'. Dee said, 'it seemed like people were really attending to the conversation. It was very different to our usual meetings.' Eddie commented, 'It is amazing how much we covered, and in such a short time. We got to a result, but in a different way'. Mia said, 'I have never seen a meeting like that in the bank before, wouldn't it be great if we did this more often. It felt purposeful but peaceful'. A different conversation about meetings was evolving.

In this conversation a thematic pattern was emerging, which continued to evolve throughout the programme. Indeed the discussion about the intractable problem has continued since the project completion. As Gergen (2000) says,

we enter into various relational forms… while at the some time treating the forms as contingent or contextually bounded. This means honouring the existing endeavours of human communities as possessing an internal validity for the participants, but acknowledging that their validity lies wholly within their particular spheres.

(Gergen:2000:196)

I am suggesting that on this occasion the participants were participating in a 'game' wherein they had an opportunity to enter into different 'relational patterns' with each other within a specified sphere. In doing so they participated with each other in a manner that was purposeful, and seriously playful.

Beech, et al (2004) further develops this thinking in their discussion about paradox in organisations. They describe serious playfulness as an approach in which action takes place, which is 'emotional and embodied, creative whilst adhering and disrupting rules, playing between multiple meanings and challenging normal boundaries through experimentation' (Beech et al, 2004, p7).

Whilst the meeting was improvised the group took their experience seriously, (as we are required to do on the doctoral programme). They talked about trying out 'different ways of being'. They felt that they had challenged the way they usually behaved, experimenting with something different. Although they adhered to the normal rules of meetings, a new pattern of interaction had emerged. It seemed that from a 'playful' improvisation, a serious intention emerged as a theme that would continue to emerge and pattern conversations throughout the programme, as we shall see.

Roberts et al (2005) discuss an aspect of the self they describe as the 'Reflected Best-Self' arguing that people's awareness of this can change, usually when we experience 'jolts', sudden experiences, which are usually challenging, but may not be traumatic. These compare with some of my experiences, the meeting with Joanne, and my assumption that I could readily access 'unconditional regard', which had been fundamental to my professional practice for twenty years. In the improvised meeting, this new way of relating in meetings had emerged, which had jolted or provoked some of the participants, Dick said that the meeting

had been a transformative experience; new patterns of behaviour were emerging within the group.

As Shotter (1999) said, 'There is something very special then, in those moments in which we sense ourselves in living contact with others and otherness in our surroundings', (p.5). We had co-created something novel, which continued as a theme organising our conversations. Van Dick et al (2006) describe the type of people and behaviour that facilitate 'organisational functioning' (p. 384), emphasising the importance of novel behaviour. 'There must be innovative and spontaneous activity that goes beyond the specific task requirements' (ibid). I cannot claim to have been aware, in the moment, of identities forming and being formed, but I did sense a new relational pattern emerging.

Power relations evolving

In the following session, the clients had been talking about the need to be more positive with themselves, and their teams. They had spent the afternoon talking about some of their good 'team experiences'. Towards the end of the afternoon we started to talk about what 'the group' appreciated about each other. I acknowledged each of them and then they each acknowledged something about a member of the 'group'. They all said something that they appreciated, including a compliment about Mia. I felt excluded, participants seemed engaged, trying things out, doing things differently, suddenly I felt an outsider. I experienced a sense of loss and anger. I stayed immovable and unspeaking in my chair, wanting to shout at them 'well did I not contribute to this then?' I felt hot and uncomfortable and wanted to leave. Previously I had sensed being both either a respected outsider or an insider, on this occasion I felt excluded, the power relations had shifted. I felt upset, silenced and shamed, an outsider to this established group.

I was shocked by this experience. I had always 'prided myself' on full participation when acting as a consultant. I was surprised when other consultants said 'you' to the client; I felt that it 'should be we'. I realised that clients do not perceive me as included; don't want me to be part of 'we'. As I reflected over the next few days on my feeling of exclusion, I started to understand that I had been experiencing an evolving pattern of power relations. Previously, without realising, I had considered myself the 'leader' of the project. Thus in this potential

shifting of power relations I had experienced anxiety regarding my identity unravelling. I wrote about the experience at length and gave it to the group to read. They were shocked and asked why I had felt unable to say anything at the time. I said that I was embarrassed by my need to be acknowledged. We talked about how I had experienced a sense of exclusion. This was new and I felt exposed and vulnerable. However this moment of heightened tension was also transformative, not only had my professional practice evolved, so had my sense of self.

I would like to consider how this work and my inquiry are beginning to affect the way that I conceptualise my work as a consultant. In order to do so I will critique and contrast this with other, more traditional, views of consulting.

Management consulting

I am positioning my professional practice in the area of management consulting, to distinguish it from other types of consulting, e.g. medical, educational. This also locates my practice in a particular discipline; one of my questions regarding identity has been resolved. This has been incredibly significant to my sense of self.

I will consider three types of consulting, which I have treated as distinct. Labelling them in this way is an oversimplification, nevertheless it is a useful academic devise, which allows me to highlight common themes and distinguish them from my own practice. It is difficult to say when 'management consultancy' as a discipline first started, as with any beginning, it is the moment we have chosen, although Taylor would probably be perceived as an early exponent. Given the wide-ranging focus of my evolving inquiry, as with any discipline, I can only provide a brief overview, nevertheless I would argue the literature is representative

Product Consulting

This approach to consulting assumes that the consultant 'has' knowledge, which is shared with the client. The consultant is an expert in a particular field, project management, IT, and they 'bring this into the organisation', usually through the sponsorship of senior management.

Nadler & Slywotzky (2005) suggest that between 1960 and 2000 an approach emerged which they describe as 'sequential consulting, divergent disciplines', Nadler & Slywotzky (2005) p 77.

> As time went on, good managers realised they needed new and sophisticated strategies involving technology, distribution, and marketing-a whole host of specialised approaches that hadn't been necessary in the past. So the search was on for consultants who could help managers attack each specific issue with a scientific, disciplined, and specialised approach. This was a dramatic departure from the days, (*before 1960, author's inclusion),* of the intuitive wise men that could consult on anything.
>
> (Nadler & Slywotzky:2005:77)

They discuss how, during this period, consultants became increasingly specialised and 'compartmentalised', becoming specialists in an area and they brought this 'expertise' to the client intervening on a regular, if infrequent basis. Cummings (2005) describe this style as 'study and recommend' calling it the 'oldest and most prevalent delivery model'. The consultant is perceived to be the expert, who is coming into the organisation, analysing the problem and delivering a solution. Its roots go back to the 1920's with the work of Taylor on increasing manpower productivity, (Taylor,1947).

A popular consultancy offering is prevalent in manufacturing and becoming increasingly popular in banking. The lean approach (Bendell, 2005) is a business processing improvement, which was developed by Toyota in the late fifties. At present Xeno, and many other organisations, are employing a large number of 'lean consultants' to observe their employees at work. The consultant's job is to look at each process from 'end-to-end' and then tell the employees how to improve.

The five key principles of the Lean Organisation are

1. the elimination of waste (or muda)
2. the identification of the Value Stream
3. the achievement of Flow through the process
4. pacing by a pull (or kanban) signal, and

5. the continuous pursuit of perfection

The consultants observe and tell the employees what they need to do differently. Whilst I am not suggesting that this does not make any difference, the results are sporadic. The fundamental assumption underpinning lean is that everybody should, and can, work in the same way.

Clearly these models are driven by the assumption that individuals are autonomous, independent, and logical. The consultant comes in and, with help from appropriate senior personnel, changes the people's behaviour by telling them a better way. It is a very transactional approach to human behaviour, based on a transmission model of communication. This is very different from the complex responsive approach to conversation in organisations, a process of gesture-response with the possibility of local interactions creating global patterns (Stacey, 2003). There is also something very 'disembodied' about these approaches, which ignores the relational aspects of consultancy and the embodied nature of relational processes. Product consulting is underpinned by several assumptions,

- the organisation as a system;
- a view of consultancy as delivered from the consultant to senior executives and continuing 'down the organisation';
- a belief that consultants and their clients are autonomous independent, logical individuals.

Thus management consulting is an expertise driven approach, based on rational precepts.

I have discussed, at length, throughout this and prior projects, how these assumptions have been challenged by Stacey (2003), Joas (1996), Griffin (2002) and Shaw (2002). In the way that I have made sense of consulting, I am arguing from a different theoretical and practical stance. I have argued that consultants and clients are socially interdependent, detailing how, in conversations with clients, new thematic patternings emerge and organise conversations in novel and unexpected ways. I have examined the corporeal nature of intention, and its impact on consultancy, indicating that it is co-created, not delivered.

In this product/expert approach, the work of the consultant is separate to the organisation; the consultants enter 'the system' diagnoses 'the problem or gap' and then redesign aspects of the organisation. When the diagnostic phase is complete, they can step back in and re-enter the system, wherein they dispense advice, which will be followed. In addition they have autonomous 'predictive' (Anscombe 1957) intentions, which are enacted by themselves and others on their return to the system.

Process consulting

Nadler & Slywotzky (2005) described process consulting as an 'emerging discipline in organisational consulting that focused on integrating the formal structures and processes of the organisation with the human side of the enterprise', p 78. They argue that it was difficult for these 'organisational types' (process consultants) to work with the 'strategy types' (product consultants), because they came from such different disciplines, (psychology and economics), and viewed organisations from different perspectives (top down, bottom up).

Schein (1999) pp 6-20 describes process consultancy as having five fundamental principles.

1. Always try to be helpful…
2. Always stay in touch with the current reality….
3. Access your ignorance…
4. Everything you do is an intervention….
5. It is the client who owns the problem and the solution….

He has developed the work of Rogers, (1967), believing that fundamentally the client knows the answers and understands the issues. The role of the consultant is to help the client diagnose the problem and distinguish the solution. He defines process consultation as,

> The creation of a relationship with the client that permits the client to perceive, understand, and act on the process events that occur in the client's external and internal environment in order to improve the situation as defined by the client.
>
> (Schein:1999:20)

Schein (1999) locates the responsibility of the relationship with the consultant, he also suggests that the consultant is able to separate himself from the client, in order to help the client understand and improve the situation. I challenge both of these assumptions, as they suggest that the consultant is able to stand outside the relationship, in order to facilitate the client's work. Human beings co-create patterns of interaction, as a consultant I am not able, alone, to help clients to see their problems. In conversations with clients I am attending in the living present, attending and participating in the micro-interactions, but not separate to them. Schein also ignores the power relating, which is endemic to conversation and hence consulting. Nor does he discuss the way in which consultants can be perceived, sponsored by senior management, as part of the senior established group, rather than an insider, or respected outsider, to the immediate client.

Abell & Simons (2000) discuss the notion of constructivist consultancy in their research on a leadership development programme. They describe a year-long (two day quarterly workshops) project of leadership development. They describe consultancy as 'narratively-oriented, collaborative, non-hierarchical, and emergent ways of working' Abell &Simons (2000) p. 160. They argue that the role of a constructivist consultant is to,

1. heighten understanding as to the complex interplay between relational processes and organisational development…
2. create a venue for the expression of multiple stories, particularly opening space for those voices and stories that may have marginalised within a given organisation.
3. offer opportunities to organisational members to reflect upon their own guiding beliefs, values ……….
4. offer a venue for joint collaborative reflection to occur, whereby organisational member can re-story (Simons,1998) their experiences on the job not only in order to made meanings out of them, but to consider the implications of those constructed meaning
5. … engage in reflexive practices in order to be better able to make meaning of the ways in which their own assumptions and behaviours might be shaping their interactions with the client group.

(Abell & Simons:2000:163)

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I have included them under process consulting as they describe their role as facilitative and collaborative. They describe their experiences and challenges in working with the organisation. Before the programme started they had extensive discussions, with the client, regarding the kind of content that should be included, in order to meet the clients needs. In line with these discussions they designed and ran a two-day workshop, which was deemed unsuccessful by both the clients and themselves (two of the nine delegates left). They responded by introducing some, client-friendly artefacts. They used audio-visual aids, assessment instruments, "legitimated research", an agenda and reframing language, and 'a consistent effort to mirror the dominant language games of the class members while also introducing them to some new ways of talking', (ibid p.172). It seems they were responding with cosmetic changes rather than taking their clients' concerns seriously.

They explain their difficulties as a 'culture clash' (ibid p. 159), related to a conflict between their 'feminist perspective' and the 'hegemonic masculinist organisational cultures'. They were perceived as adopting as a 'soft approach', (ibid p.174). Nevertheless they claimed that the distinction between the 'educators' and the ' learners' was blurred and that participants had gained more understanding about their need to relate to each other.

I have written about this at some length given their commitment to working with the client (rather than on). Although they consulted beforehand with the clients, it seemed that their workshops were very much related to their own theoretical background and would challenge their claim to be 'co-constructing' with their clients. I was also struck by their lack of attention to their conversations with clients. They did not notice participants were struggling until the end of the first two-day workshop. Whilst they use words like emergent and dancing with the clients, nevertheless their response to the clients' concerns was to introduce 'artefacts', to 'mirror' clients' language to explain their own ideas more effectively. They reiterate the importance to remain true to their beliefs and respond to the clients concerns with cosmetic changes. Their commitment to reflexivity in their professional practice was admirable and helped them engage with their clients and find ways of different working. Nevertheless they do not discuss how they had been changed by the experience. Thus I still feel the main shift was assumed to be in the client, despite their claim of the 'blurred boundaries'.

Although process consulting is focussed on working with, rather than on, clients, I suggest that there is still an underlying assumption that whilst the consultant will help the client to change or grow, there is little reference to how the consultant may change.

Change Agency

Caldwell (2003) describes 'Change Agency' as a relatively recent phenomenon, developed in the 1980's. He continues,

> For the purposes of classification a change agent is defined as an internal or external individual or team responsible for initiating, sponsoring, directing, managing or implementing a specific change initiative, project or complete change programme.
>
> (Caldwell:2003:140)

Caldwell posits a view of the consultant as an 'autonomous, independent individual, or team' who act as if they are both part of, and external to, a system that they can modify. He suggests that they may be internal to the organisation, usually at senior levels, or they may be brought in from outside to provide, 'advice, expertise, project management … or process skill in facilitating change', (ibid). The required change has been previously agreed, and the consultant's job is to make it happen. He does not describe the fundamentally social, interdependent view of people that I have postulated. He presupposes a level of predictive ability on the part of the consultant as well as an overly rational view of the way in which people work together.

Quinn & Quinn (2005) focus on 'Becoming a Transformational Change Agent'. They posit,

> **Strategies for Changing Human Systems**
> The Transformational Strategy.
> Method: Modelling by others
> Objective: Alignment with changing reality
> - Am I aware of the challenge of the realities of the emergent system?
> - What are my patterns of self deception?
> - Are my values and behaviours aligned?
> - Am I freed from external sanctions?

- Do I have a vision of the common good?

- Do I operate at the edge of chaos?

- Do I maintain reverence for others?

- Do I inspire others to enact their best self?

- Am I engaging in unconventional or paradoxical ways?

- Have I changed myself as a model for the system to change?

(Quinn & Quinn:2005:261)

Whilst talking about operating on the edge of chaos there is an assumption of consultant autonomy in their description of their strategies. In using language such as, 'do I have a vision of the common good?' the consultant is clearly in control. Despite their mention of emergence and chaos, they assume a control over themselves and the client, which indicates a view of human beings as independent rather than interdependent. They present an idealised view of the way in which consultants work. However in reading their work, I did have a sense of their commitment to a more relational view of consulting. They also refer to the need to be willing to change, suggesting an awareness of the issue of identity formation in consultant-client relationships. Nevertheless, in 'changing myself as a model', they are suggesting that they do this independently, rather than interdependently, making no reference to the tensions of being paradoxically both an insider and an outsider. However they write in a more relational and questioning way than many other management writers.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) was developed originally by Cooperrider and Srivastva, (1987). It has been widely used, and is described as a benign and powerful form of intervention for organisational change. Cooperrider & Whitney (2006) claim that there have been 'literally hundreds of people involved in co-creating practices for doing AI'. Essentially AI focuses on the positive stories in organisations, with the assumption that people will learn from each other's positive experiences and build on these.

Appreciating and Valuing the Best of "What is"

⬇

Envisioning "What Might Be"

⬇

Dialoguing "What Should Be"

⬇

Basic Assumption:

An Organisation is a Mystery

To Be Embraced

(Cooperrider & Whitney:2006:29)

It is underpinned by social constructivism, action research and positive social science (ibid p.3) they explain that the consultant helps the clients, 'discover, what gives life (appreciating), … dream what might be (envisioning results), … design (what should be – the ideal), … distinguish destiny (how to empower, learn and adjust/improvise), (ibid p. 30). Whilst this is an interesting approach, there is a lacking sense of consultant-client relationship. The reification of an organisation as a 'mystery to be embraced' ignores the processes of relating and myriads of conversations that make up an organisation and there is a clear assumption that the consultants can pre-determine what will emerge with the client. There is little reference to an interdependence with the clients, nor how or if they may be affected. It would be interesting to discuss and detail the emotional, embodied and interdependent nature of consultant-client relationships.

Management consultancy; concluding remarks

Whilst I accept this is a brief overview of some of the consultative approaches, I would contend it is reasonably representative. In comparing the differing types of management consultancy I am highlighting some fundamental differences to my sense making of my own professional practice and others. I am challenging the assumption that human beings are

rational, autonomous and independent, and suggesting that a detailed examination of consultant-client relationship would contribute to the discourse.

Consultant–client relationships and complex responsive processes thinking

Before discussing my contribution it is useful to encapsulate some of the distinctions that I have been examining.

A comparison of approaches to consultancy

	Product Consulting	Process Consulting	Change Agency	Consulting considered from a complex responsive processes approach
Assumptions about people	Human beings are independent and autonomous	Human beings are independent and autonomous	Human beings are independent and autonomous	Human beings are social and interdependent
Assumptions About clients	Clients need their problems diagnosed, and to be given advice and expertise	Clients need to be supported, to understand their problems and develop skills	People need to be helped to change their behaviour, in line with a previously agreed stance	Consultants and clients are interdependently co-creating conversations wherein new conversations and patterns of relating evolve
Intervention	Delivers knowledge and expertise	Helps others develop skills and expertise	Helps clients understand and implement	Being present to patterns of evolving power relations and emerging themes
Impact on client	Problems have been fixed	Clients left with the skills and knowledge to solve problems	Clients have developed new expertise and awareness	New conversations have evolved and their identity may have evolved
Impact on consultants	Success may lead to more work and possible career enhancement	Success may lead to more work and understanding their own practice	Possibility to understand and develop practice and to get repeat work.	Identity formation and the possibility of developing own practice. Success could lead to more work.
Impact on organisations	Change of system	Development of client's skills	Organisational and cultural change	New patterns of relating and conversation will emerge

There is a common thread across all types of consultancy to gain more work with clients. As previously mentioned sixty five percent of consultancy work is now repeat work, (Greiner & Poulfelt, 2005). Much of the management consultancy literature is underpinned by the assumption that human beings are independent, autonomous and seemingly disembodied. I have disagreed, through Projects Two and Three, arguing that human beings are social and interdependent; engaging in relationships that both enable and constrain. I have highlighted the corporeal aspect of consultant-client relationships. The way in which consultants diagnose and plan, or help others to do so, assumes that people possess the power to change others. It ignores the evolving patterns of power relating and the way in which conversations emerge. There is little focus on power as an ebb and flow in relationships and the implications for consultant-client relationships although there is a recognition of the power dynamics, given that consultants are hired by senior people. I have become increasingly aware of this impact throughout this inquiry and my own tension; shifting between insider and outsider, at times paradoxically being both established and an outsider. This is not to suggest that consultants do not make a difference in their work in working with clients, I am suggesting an alternative explanation for what may be happening. I have detailed my professional practice as social, emergent and embodied; a function of co-created conversations, hence that management consultancy is complex responsive processes of relating.

Throughout my inquiries, I have demonstrated a new way of understanding my practice, which has implications for who I am. In examining my work I have argued convincingly that I understand my practice in a fundamentally different way from the mainstream literature. I have elucidated the way in which my attention to conversation within the living present, my growing awareness of my bodily responses and my consciousness of patterns of power relating allows new thematic patternings to emerge. My focus on corporeal aspects of consultancy clearly distinguishes my work from other models, not only with regard to noticing my bodily responses but also others'. Recently I said to a client, interrupting her, 'I want to disappear into this wall, you feel like an oncoming train'. It was a visceral response, and she responded with a description of her feelings; icy cold, total attention, extreme focus.

My practice continues to evolve in a way that is a contribution to how consultancy is normally conceptualised. It is clear that I am not a consultant 'doing' something to a client, being unchanged by the experience. I am positing that, de facto, consultants working with clients are working interdependently and therefore their identity may evolve.

Shaw (2002) describes conversations in organisations as a 'relational view of forming and being formed simultaneously in interaction', p. 68. The delegates from the final project focussed extensively on the importance of their interaction with the rest of the group and the need to attend to conversations. This has become an important theme in light of my engagement with complex responsive processes thinking. I am postulating a relationship between the responses of these delegates and my engagement in the doctoral process, thus indicating the fundamentally social, interdependent relationship between consultant and clients. In the same way that my sense of self has evolved in working alongside them, so had theirs alongside the rest of the group.

I have written about a leadership programme in a large retail bank. By engaging with the narratives in a reflective and reflexive manner I have highlighted the main themes that have emerged throughout my inquiry. The themes that I have distinguished indicate a development of both practicing, and conceptualising consultancy. I have illustrated aspects of my practice where my inquiry has transformed the way in which I work with clients, and compared how this continues to pattern my work. I have drawn on four organisational incidents, two painful for me, two immensely enjoyable, to indicate, that identity formation is linked to evolving power relations. This was particularly noticeable when I realised that I had seen myself as leader of the group, without having been aware of this feeling. The shock of feeling excluded when the group clearly did not need any 'leadership' was traumatic. Yet in my reflections on my work, and discussion with the group of my response, I received a 'jolt', which had transformed my understanding of my own practice and my self. I experienced a ' loss of meaning and indeed, an alarming experience of loss of self', (Shaw, 2002). I became aware, in the moment, that previously I had believed that I could lead the project to develop their leadership behaviours, despite previous inquiries where I had challenged such a transactional approach. However in conversations with myself (through writing and thinking), and in the conversations with my clients I sensed my practice, and identity, evolving.

These clients also reiterated the importance of being aware of conversation in each moment. This is the first time that clients have described this way of attending in the 'living present', as Antonacopoulou & Tsoukas (2002) describe,

For Chia, taking his cues from Bergson, lived time – duree – is the only real time: chronological time is a mere convention. What really matters is how time is experienced, and human experience of time is indivisible and flow-like. In that sense, change is an intrinsic feature of reality and we need to find new ways in which change may be studied and reported.

(Antonacopoulou & Tsoukas:2002:859)

I suggest that my clients have, in a sense, developed a different sense of time, away from their usual, chronologically 'time delineated' operations and moved towards a way of seeing time that allows them to be more reflexive than they were previously. Mead's view of time as the living present informs my work

The past as it appears with the present and future, is the relation of the emergent event to the situation out of which it arose, and it is the event that defines that situation. The continuance or disappearance of that which arises is the present passing into the future. Past, present and future belong to a passage, which attains temporal structure through the event, and they may be considered long or short as they are compared with other such passages. But as existing in nature, so far as such a statement has significance, the past and the future are the boundaries of what we term the present, and are determined by the conditioning relationships of the event to its situation.

(Mead:1932:25)

Thus in working with clients I am paying attention to the present in a way that is aware of the past, in that moment, becoming conscious of the future. It could be argued that this theme of being in the living present has emerged in co-creation with, my clients and myself, indicating something evolving within our 'selves', although I am not suggesting that it was not present before in mine and others' practice, it became a more open focus with this project

Conclusion

I have written about a leadership programme in a large retail bank. By engaging with the narratives in a reflective and reflexive manner I have highlighted the main themes that have emerged through my inquiry. The themes that I have distinguished indicate a different way of both practicing, and conceptualising consultancy. I have illustrated aspects of my practice where my inquiry has transformed the way in which I work with clients, and compared how this continues to pattern my work. I have drawn on four organisational incidents, two painful for me, two immensely enjoyable, to indicate, that identity formation is not necessarily linked to shame.

My inquiry relate to how I can understand my work in terms of co-created conversations in which identities continue to evolve; I have examined my role in co-creating free-flowing conversations, and ask what this means for my practice? I connect with how this relates to my previous work on emergent, social, corporeal intention and the role of power? In critiquing some of the mainstream literature on consultancy, I challenge my own, and others' preconceptions about my practice. I adopt a complex responsive processes approach to my work and elucidate, and what that implies in terms of emergent identity. I would suggest that the main thrust of my argument relates to my understanding of my practice from a Complex responsive processes viewpoint; I have not made sense of other approaches to consulting from this perspective. This will need further consideration as I bring my inquiry together in my synopsis.

From the perspective of my own practice I have elucidated three main issues,

1. the interdependence of consultant and client.
2. the way in which identity forms and is being formed in the co-created experiences with consultant and client, and how this coincides with provocative or traumatic moments.
3. the importance of embodiment in consulting, (detailed more thoroughly in project 3)

This inquiry continues to pattern my thinking as a practitioner and is an organising theme in my conversations with clients. In the synopsis I will continue to develop a way of

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understanding consultant-client relationships as a complex responsive processes of relating; in particular indicating how, whilst it is not always discussed in the prevailing literature, management consulting is a complex and subtle relationship between consultant and client, which may have profound implications for both. The main thrust of my argument relates to picking up on my practice from a complex responsive processes understanding; I have not made sense of other approaches to consulting from this perspective. This will need further consideration as I bring my inquiry together in my synopsis.

Reflections on Project Four

In approaching Project Four I felt stuck, unsure of my research topic. In my progression viva I was asked what I did, was I a coach or a management consultant, and where was the relevant literature. This was a 'jolt' to my thinking that led to my consideration of identity formation and management consulting. Thus I started to engage more with the notion of identity and what that meant. For some years I have argued against the concept of character or personality as a thing, formed in childhood, now I had a theory that helped me make sense of this view. I analysed the way in which identity, conceptualised as an emerging process, forms and is formed within the consultant-client relationship. I focussed on management, philosophical and sociological literature (Stryker, 1980; Stets & Burke, 2005; Taylor, 1989; McCall, 2003) in order to understand the wider discourse, as these were the disciplines that seemed to have informed my work. However Mead and Elias provided the richest source for understanding identity as a process that continues to emerge in social interaction.

It has been interesting in reflecting on the research that I have moved further with my thinking. In writing the synopsis I realised that there were issues that I had discussed with other consultants, which were not referred to in the prevailing literature. I had a sense in reading the literature that management consultants were autonomous, but through further engagement with the literature and conversations with consultants I realised that this was over simplistic. When I was presenting my work at an academic conference I was challenged by fellow researchers who argued that they were, of course, aware of being affected by their consulting work. I am arguing that consulting projects are described in such a way that certain aspects are picked out: results, facilitation, project management, at the expense of others; co-created conversation, evolving themes, embodiment, inclusion and exclusion.

Finally the limited references to identity formation, Jabri (2004) and colleagues from previous doctoral cohorts, (O'Flynn, 2005; Johnson, 2005), needed further development. It has been interesting in reflecting on the four projects to see that emerging intentions and identity formations were linked with those moments when power relations evolve. I realised how the

doctoral process had fundamentally affected me, and hence my professional practice. In writing my synopsis I have considered what that means for my original contribution both theoretically and to professional practice.

Conclusion

This thesis has evolved over three years, and extrapolates how my understanding of my professional practice has been fundamentally affected. Through adopting a social, iterative and reflexive approach to narrative inquiries and by locating my research in a wide variety of literature, my formulation of how I work with clients has been transformed.

I have examined how intentions emerge within consultant-client relationships, highlighting their social and embodied nature. In particular I have focussed upon how this occurs in moments of evolving power relations and explicated how this patterns conversations as an organising theme. I have been influenced by complex responsive processes thinking, which conceptualises the self as forming and being formed through processes of social interaction.

Through my research I have challenged the prevailing literature in showing how the consultant-client relationship is inherently interdependent; exploring our open-ended responsiveness to one another, building on Mead's (1934) notion of a reflexive, social self and referring to Elias' description of relationships as both enabling and constraining.

I have developed the work of others in understanding consultant-client relationships as complex responsive processes of relating, (Christensen, 2005; O'Flynn, 2005) referring to the importance of presence as an energy and focus that embraces a willingness to be changed (Friis, 2006; Johnstone, 1989), detailing how identity forms and is formed within consulting projects. I have described how evolving power relations are experienced corporeally within moments when intentions emerge and identity forms, whereby in conversations new patterns emerge, I have linked this with Larsen's work on spontaneity and evolving power relations (Larsen, 2006).

Given the social, interdependent nature of human beings, our professional practice is inherently unpredictable. This does not mean that change does not occur rather that by acknowledging the co-creation of conversations, and focussing on the moment, we can powerfully influence conversations, and make a difference in the organisation. However the results cannot be pre-determined. Whilst many management consultants are aware of this, it needs more discussion and research.

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Appendix One

Article Presented to MCD conference 2007: Copenhagen Business School

Title of paper The Experience of Being Changed Through Consulting

Catherine Woodward
Email cwarturocons@aol.com