2006

What causes an organisation to be what it is and to become what it could be: A philosophical expedition

Alan Byrne

Edith Cowan University

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What causes an organisation to be what it is and to become what it could be: A Philosophical Expedition

ALAN BYRNE, B.Comm, MBA
Edith Cowan University,
Faculty of Business and Law

Date: December 2006
Abstract

This work represents the evolution of a thesis asking the question what causes an organisation to be what it is and to become what it could be. The author’s thought development is integral to the project and is highlighted throughout. Conversation and relationship become privileged as the transformative cause of change; of being. This study faithfully reproduces how a thesis actually happens, with all the inherent uncertainty and messiness. The life experiences of the author are brought to bear in this autoethnographic study of the business world.

Declaration:

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

(i) incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;

(ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or

(iii) contain any defamatory material.

I also grant permission for the Library at Edith Cowan University to make duplicate copies of my thesis as required.

Signed: ____________________ Date:____________________

Alan Byrne
Acknowledgements:

My life partner Ana for keeping me grounded with her always insightful comments and questions;
My daughter Fabienne for listening to me, commenting on my work and continually encouraging me;
My principal supervisors: Scott, for getting me a scholarship and keeping me focused; Mark, for motivating me, believing in me, and helping me to unleash my authorial voice and Llandis, for his encouragement and guidance in getting me through the examination process.
My doctoral colloquium colleagues: Ed, Andre, Athol and Mark for providing a forum for thought development and friendship;
Richard McKenna for having the guts to introduce the unconventional Stacey in the MBA programme at ECU and Dr. Per Johansen for his irreverence in teaching it.
The philosophers; Rorty, Stacey, Socrates, Bakhtin and others for their profound insights and questioning of convention;
My e-mail colleagues; Professor Ralph Stacey, Professor David Snowden, Professor David Boje, Professor Karen Stephenson, Professor Ian Malcolm, Dr. Mark Williams, Dr. Scott Gardner, Dr. Per Johansen, Dr. Alan Tapper, Dr. David Ryan, Dr. Llandis Barret-Pugh, Dr. Philip Dobson, Bent Eckberg and Noel Brings Jacobsen; for their time and energy in engaging me in conversation and providing me with their resources and time to enable my own development. It speaks volumes for their generosity of spirit and willingness to co-operate. It does make a difference;
My work colleagues for the past 27 years for their camaraderie and informal discussions; and finally
My bosses for the past 27 years for giving me so much to think about.
Jeanie Johnston, Irish Emigrant Ship, Painted by Mr. Kenneth King and in the collection of Mr. and Mrs. J. Waring, Castleknock, Dublin, Ireland (King, 2003-2005)

Figure 1: The overarching metaphor for this thesis representing my voyage of discovery, with me as the ship being tossed in seas of thought, whilst my sails are filled by winds of understanding
Forward

I guess the funny thing about forwards is that you look backwards to write them.

Many PhD’s are consigned to gather dust on bookshelves having been read by a handful of academics and all your relations (at least that’s what they tell you). If this happens to mine, so be it. I carry the value of doing a PhD with me every day. My hope is that my interactions with those around me reflects my voyage and that in some small way I can bring to consciousness a better way for organisations to be.

What I present to you is my voyage in completing my PhD warts and all. That it is a messy process is undeniable; full of changes in direction, university politics, frustration, jubilation and just getting fed up. If you get a sense of this is how a PhD actually gets done, rather than the sanitized version with its academic structure, headings and legitimacy that you normally see in the published version, then you will be able to relate more to the voyage I have been on.

I dedicate this, my work of art, to those I love and that love me without condition, my family; my life partner Ana, my daughter Fabienne, Mum, Dad, brothers Simon and David, sisters Rhona and Jane. That I am judged as a good husband, father, son and brother is what is important to me and gives my life meaning.
Introduction

Welcome to this my work of art. Like all works of art beauty is in the eye of the beholder. You may find this study disjointed, discontinuous, lacking direction, or you may delight in the freedom of form I exercise throughout.

I came to the conclusion early in my PhD studies that the journey is far more interesting and important than the destination. So I decided that my PhD would faithfully represent my voyage of discovery. You should expect politics, emotions; passion, despair, joy, boredom, anger; different writing styles, repetition – in fact all of the messiness of being human and how things actually get done.

As such there is no attempt in this study to present a conventional structure that would be more familiar to you. What you get is how I actually undertook my PhD, how it really was, how it really emerged, how it evolved. Like all life it is a series of conversations with people. I freely admit that I found the format very difficult to deal with and conceptualise. I would prefer to produce a polished document which logically flows and is well connected and presented. However that is how I have been trained and what I am most comfortable with. To adhere would be to honour convention. This presentation has stretched me and given me some angst and discomfort. Nevertheless to represent my voyage truthfully it is necessary to go into the unknown; to relinquish control; to allow self-organisation; to welcome unconventionality; to subvert official ideologies.

There is a beginning, a continuation and an end. The story is told through e-mail conversations punctuated by documentation. The beginning shows my initial interest in evolution and the biological necessity to co-operate. This is punctuated by my original research proposal. The continuation shows my philosophical development and the resultant change in the research proposal. It contains my proposal presentation, the feedback from reviewers and my response to those reviewers. Ethics clearance is also covered. Finally the end demonstrates my authorial voice as I give way to the expression of my learning and my heart.

The research proposals are updated in the end, but not changed. They form a major part of the thesis and rather than re-edit and co joining them I have included them in their entirety to demonstrate how the thesis actually came about and my own development in the process.

My greatest wish is that what I have written resonates with you, makes sense to you and is persuasive to you. If I can raise your consciousness as to what I believe causes organisations to be the way they are, and how they could be better, then perhaps the language running through your head may change, and thereby your interactions and relationship with your work colleagues.

If this PhD should be resigned to a being a door stop, so be it. For me the greatest benefit has been my own development as what I have learnt will forever be reflected in my ongoing local cooperative interactions, and who knows how that may amplify?
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1 THE BEGINNING

To understand where I have come from in my thinking and to appreciate where I am now, you must sail in my wake as I cut through the waves of understanding on my voyage of discovery. I have maintained logs of my voyage, in chronological order. These logs mainly record interactions between my colleagues, others and myself. Careful reading will bring to life the metamorphosis in my thinking, emerging from my interaction/relationship through language with colleagues and others.

Each e-mail is enclosed in a box. My comments, where I have felt it necessary to make comment upon the e-mail, are provided post e-mail and in italics. I have removed the contact details of the contributors. I have also included significant attachments where appropriate.

My recording of e-mails commenced in May 2003. At the time I had no intention of including them in my thesis. This only emerged in late 2005.
1.1 E-MAILS 14TH MAY 2003 – 10 SEPTEMBER 2003

From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Wednesday, 14 May 2003 09:40
To: bent.eckberg
Subject: Personal Request

Dear Mr. Eckberg,

You may remember me, my name is Alan Byrne and I gave the talk on Strategic Risk Management at a security seminar in Perth, Western Australia. I hope you are keeping well.

The reason for my e-mail is of a personal nature. I am currently putting together a paper to apply for a Scholarship to complete a PhD. My topic is in the area of natural science and cooperation. One such topic is symbiosis - cooperation amongst living organisms, including using each others waste products - good for the environment and each other.

I have located an area of study on the Internet and it is within this area that I would like to complete an in-depth case study. The area in question is in the municipality of Kalundborg where there is a classical example of industrial symbiosis. The organisations involved are: Energy E2 Asnaes Power Station, BPB Gyproc A/S, Novo Nordisk A/S, Novozymes A/S, Statoil A/S, Bioteknisk Jordrens Soilrem A/S, Noveren I/S and Kalundborg Municipality. Their cooperation and environmental sustainability is fascinating.

Hence the reason for my e-mail - do you know anything about, or anybody, connected to Kalundborg. I realise it’s a long shot; however I have to start somewhere. I want to find out who put this whole project together and how - and as I know one contact can lead to many.

I would appreciate any assistance; however I am mindful that you are very busy.

Kind Regards,
Alan Byrne.

I had only recently decided to undertake a PhD, having taken off 1 year from studying to read books I was interested in. Primarily the subject choice was evolution. I read Darwin, Dawkins, Margulis, Lovelock and Capra. Through my interest in evolution I was drawn to co-operation vs. competition and happened to come across the Kalundborg industrial park while searching on the Internet under symbiosis, an evolutionary term used by Margulis to demonstrate the dependency of life forms on each other. Kalundborg is located in Denmark and there is a high degree of interdependency between the industries established there, requiring ongoing co-operation. The idea of researching such a well established industrial park was very appealing and I had a contact in Denmark, Bent. I asked for his help in making contact with the industrial park.
Alan - Hello again.
Here is some news about the Symbioses Project.
The project is formed under the name:
Kalundborgergnens Symbiosecenter

The steering committee is based at
Kalundborg Erhvervsråd(K. Business Development Council) which is a municipality council.

I have talked to the secretary of the council Ms. Jane Steen Nielsen, who will be happy to assist you in any contact or wishes you may have.
She has your name now.

This is the address:
Jane Steen Nielsen, Erhvervssekretær
The contact address to the Council is:
Kalundborgergnens Symbiosecenter
C/o Kalundborgergnens Erhvervsråd
P.O. Box 25
Casa Danica Center
Hareskovvej 19
DK 4400 Kalundborg

I hope this will be of help to you.
Good luck and best regards
Bent
Hello Bent,

Thank you very much for your speedy reply, and the excellent information you have provided to me. It is more than I had hoped for.

I will now pursue the connection you have provided, and I will let you know if I am successful in obtaining the scholarship (applications are to be made by October 2003 - my first task is to get a supervisor).

Your assistance is greatly appreciated.

Regards,

Alan Byrne.

You will gather that at this stage I had not yet got a supervisor, but I was determined to get the research proposal together. Evolution was my main interest and in particular the importance of co-operation.
Dear Ms. Nielsen,

My name is Alan Byrne, and I received your contact details from Bent Eckberg.

Firstly my apologies for not knowing any Danish, it is fortunate for me that we can communicate in English.

I am preparing a short paper as part of an application for a scholarship to commence a PhD. My area of interest is how we can learn from nature, which after all has survived for some 3.5 billion years. I have been reading material for almost one year now, and I am comfortable with the area I wish to investigate. Co-operation is one of the main themes. I was particularly interested in Lynn Margulis and her concept of symbiosis. When I was completing some Internet searches on this topic up came Industrial Symbiosis and Kalundborg. What I had been struggling with was not researching the living planet (Gaia theory) nor cooperation in nature - which amounts to the literature review, but what practical research I could undertake.

What you are doing at Kalundborg, to me, is exceptional and very advanced in its thinking. You seem to have incorporated many of the principles from nature, and created an ecologically sustainable project.

I would very much like to carry out an in-depth analysis of what you have done and how you have done it. I am also fascinated to know how you got started and what you were thinking.

I am very aware of the great distance that exists between researcher and subject, which will make things more problematical but not impossible.

For now, all I require is an overview of the project, which I can include with my initial submission. More importantly I need to know if you believe it is possible for me to do the research from here once I am in a position to start - and if you will have the time or resource to assist me.

I realise it is a lot to ask, particularly as you have not even met with me. However I believe in what you are doing and I want to communicate it to as many people as I can so hopefully more people will listen and get the message.

Please let me know what you think, and if you require any more information I will get it for you.

Regards,

Alan Byrne.
Making initial contact by e-mail was based on the premise that if you don’t ask, you don’t get. My worst case scenario was they would not reply or reply in the negative, but nothing ventured nothing gained.

Ms. Jane Steen responded on 19 May 2003. Unfortunately I have been unable to contact Ms. Steen to seek her approval for inclusion of her e-mail. Therefore I will simply state that she informed me that the symbiosis partners were to have a meeting on the 26th May and that following that meeting I would be contacted.

I continue to be surprised by the co-operation I receive from people I have never met. They bring a smile to my face and warm the heart. Such people set an example of how welcoming and uplifting some forms of co-operation are.

From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Tuesday, 20 May 2003 09:47
To: Jane Steen
Subject: Re: Kalundborgegnens Symbiosecener

Dear Jane,

Thank you for the reply. If there is any information you require in the interim please let me know. As I am unfamiliar with the Danish culture, can you also let me know if I step out of line (for example I note both you and Bent addressed me as Dear Alan Byrne, and you have your name as Jane Steen, whilst I addressed you as Ms. Nielsen). I am very interested in culture, and would appreciate your guidance in ensuring my approach is within Danish cultural boundaries.

Regards,

Alan Byrne.

Here I am expressing my empathy for different cultures, and I am trying to take the time to recognise those differences and embrace them. This is probably a result of being a migrant myself, and finding intolerance to my differences.
Hi Jane,

I am anxious to find out how the meeting went on Monday last week.

Your experience in Kalundborg is unique, and represents self-organisation that mirrors natural systems. I am excited by the prospect of centring my PhD around such a project.

I have to commence writing my proposal for the scholarship and I need to find out if I have your support. Hopefully your response will be in the affirmative. If so, as I indicated in a previous e-mail all I will need at this stage is a summary of what has taken place.

If I am successful in obtaining a scholarship (and I believe with your support this will not be a problem) I will commence my PhD in November this year. It will then be some time in 2004 that I make contact with you (or your nominated contact) again. By then I will have begun to formulate the questions I would like to get answered.

Please let me know if there is anything that you need. It has taken me the best part of a year of research to come up with the area I am interested in and your project is, as far as I am concerned, the only one in the world (with such a history) that fits what I am trying to research.

Regards,

Alan.

*Following up, I found to be particularly important in achieving any type of outcome. There is of course a fine balance between following up and becoming a pest. The language used in the e-mail is particularly important as there is no opportunity to clarify any misinterpretations. Therefore I take seriously the written text I use in such e-mail requests and replies.*
From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Monday, 9 June 2003 10:19  
To: Bent Eckberg  
Subject: Re: Personal Request

Dear Bent,

My apologies for bothering you again, but I have been unable to contact Ms. Jane Steen Nielsen. We did communicate via e-mail, and Ms. Nielsen informed me that her committee were meeting on May 26 and that they would discuss my request. Since then, despite two further e-mails from me, I have received no reply.

I don't know if there is a problem, but if there is I need to know sooner than later. As I explained to you, this project is ideal and I am anxious to know what the outcome of the meeting was.

I do not wish to apply any undue pressure, but I do need to have some idea of where I stand. As you were so timely with your responses, I hope you can let me know what is going on.

I regret having to disturb you again particularly when you have been so helpful already.

Kind regards,

Alan Byrne.

And if I get no reply from one source, I go back to the original source.

From: Bent Eckberg  
Sent: Thursday, 12 June 2003 15:39  
To: Byrne, Alan  
Subject: SV: Personal Request

Dear Alan Byrne

Sorry for the delay but my position has been somewhat turbulent the last days.

I have talked to Jane Steen Nielsen and she told me that the problem was that the meeting 26th of May was cancelled. Due to this she took your case to the chairman of the council who endorsed it and decided to send it on to one of the actual experts in the symbiosis team with a recommendation that they continue the process with you.

The expert should receive the message by mail today and respond directly to you soon. I did not catch his name in detail but it was ???.. Brinks Jacobsen.

So it all seems quite positive even if it's not going as fast as you would like. I wish you all the best.

Best regards Bent


Finally a reply. Now I’m starting to get a bit excited. What I thought was a long shot looks like it may bear fruit.

From: Noel Brings Jacobsen  
Sent: Thursday, 12 June 2003 17:49  
To: Byrne, Alan  
Cc: Jane Hansen (E-mail)  
Subject: SV: Kalundborgegnens Symbiosecener  
Attachments: Leiden.doc  

Dear Alan  
Attached you will find a paper written by me on Kalundborg; I am former director for the Symbiosis Institute and works now a consultant for the Institute. The Research paper attached is only for your use.  
All best  
Noel Brings Jacobsen  

This was a most welcome e-mail. It included, as an attachment a detailed history of Kalundborg industrial park which further motivated my desire to research this facility as a case study in co-operation.

From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Monday, 16 June 2003 12:53  
To: s.gardner  
Subject: PhD scholarship application  

Hi Scott,  

Hope all is well with you at ECU - pity the Scots were not able to hold off the SA's.  

I am now in a position to commence writing my application for a PhD. I have at last got confirmation from my preferred research site, that they are willing to help me.  

In a nutshell - learning co-operation from living organisms and applying these insights. Adopts more of a a systems view of life. Current (2002) advances in genetics and microbiology amount to a dramatic shift in the theory of evolution - from the neo-Darwinist emphasis on 'chance necessity' to a systems view that sees evolutionary change as a manifestation of life's self-organisation. Humans are very much part of the living network and should be embracing the lessons learnt over billions of years by other living entities. This study will look behind the all too common paradigm of nature as 'Red in tooth and Claw' to examine how living systems have cooperated to progress, rather than competed to ensure existence.  

As soon as I have a draft, if it is OK with you, I will make contact. With your help I can then sculpt it to best present my application for a scholarship. I am also aware that I need a supervisor, and that there are forms to be filled out.  

The application is due October 2003 - I will need to confirm this.
Let me know in the interim if there is anything else I should be addressing (when I have the draft I have no doubt there will be plenty of issues to address but I would prefer to have something prepared first, from which we can then work).

I hope I am not assuming too much in approaching you with this - let me know if it sits easily with you, and that you have no problem is assisting me with the application.

Regards,

Alan.

Scott was one of my lecturers when I was studying for a masters of business administration. I found him to be extremely practical and helpful. At this stage I still had no supervisor appointed. Please note that Scott uses an Apple Mac computer, unlike everyone else I deal with. For this reason copies of his e-mails don’t always have the date/time stamps

From: Scott Gardner
Sent: Monday, 16 June 2003 17:39
To: Byrne, Alan
Subject: Re: PhD scholarship application

Hi Alan

Should be fine but the sooner the better in terms of time pressure. Early to mid-July is looking like your best bet. I am on holiday from Monday 23 June-July 4.

Cheers

Scott

On 8/7/03 2:29 PM, "Alan Byrne" wrote:
    Hi Scott,

    Thanks for your time today; your input was most informative.

    I understand this is an iterative process, and I am willing to listen to any suggestions to improve on the draft copy I have given you.
    I also appreciate your focus on the 'stakeholders' in this process - the committee - and they are important as I am applying for a scholarship.

    As stated my immediate goal is to have my scholarship approved. From that point onwards, I have no doubt that the project will evolve - particularly with the resources of the University and a supervisor.
    I look forward to hearing from you.

    Regards,

    Alan.
Hi Alan

Good to talk. Apologies for the short span of attention this morning.
I will digest what you have to say and advise on the next step.

Cheers
Scott

In re-iterating the focus of the proposed study, Scott introduced stakeholder expectations, and in particular the need to focus the study on being accepted by the various university committees who would approve scholarships. Obtaining a scholarship was particularly important to me, for without one I was in no position to commence a PhD. This necessity was to drive my compliance with the process.

On 9/7/03 10:06 AM, "Alan Byrne" wrote:

Hi Scott,

I have done some thinking since our conversation yesterday, and I wanted to share those thoughts with you.

Regarding the area within which the materials presented lie - I went over the subject matter and found a pattern. Each one belongs in Theories of Evolution - all the areas I have examined are related to evolution.

I then re-assessed the title, taking on board that it is too general and did not have a pragmatic focus. To this end I stepped back from the focus (which as you indicate will present itself in a greater light in the first 9 months of lit reviews) and decided that what I was actually proposing was strategic. The industrial network in Kalundborg is a classic example of the type of strategies learned from nature - that being the strategy of evolution - self-organisation, co-operation etc. To enable those strategies you need close and small communities etc.

So the topic appears to make sense as strategies learnt from the evolution of living systems - though this needs to be tightened.

Let me know what you think - but I am much happier with this approach as it involves the two areas of my interest - strategy and evolution. I also anticipate that the lit review will require shortening and re-focusing.

Regards,

Alan.

From this e-mail you will see that I am being questioned as to the far-reaching nature of what I am proposing. Scott was advising me that I needed greater focus and needed to establish what area(s) of theory I was going to contribute to.
Hi Alan

Your refocus makes good sense.

The strategy literature is pretty diverse these days and I am assuming that you are familiar with Ralph Stacey’s work and in particular his most recent material which posits relationship psychology as the basis for generative strategy. Could be a good fit here for you?

Richard is the expert but Per is also big on Stacey as you probably know.

Have a look at Stacey (2002) — latest text in the in library, and a few allied thinkers (from the references) and do a minor rework on the proposal along the lines suggested. I will then be in a position to recommend you for a scholarship and hopefully identify a suitable supervisor. (Joy Hocking or Pierre Horwitz are possibilities). If no go then dare I say Alma Whiteley at Curtin.

See how you go in the next couple of weeks; get the forms from the Graduate School. And get back to me as soon as you can.

Regards

Scott

Some useful advice from Scott, in particular the references to Stacey (with whom I was already familiar). Scott had also begun to suggest some supervisors. I had spoken with Alma Whiteley at Curtin University in Western Australia whilst undertaking my MBA. Alma was very interested in value driven organisations and complexity science, she was very gracious in meeting with me and giving me some of her excellent resources. I have found this to be a welcome trait in the vast majority of academics I have made contact with.

On 9/7/03 11:47 AM, "Alan Byrne" wrote:

Thanks Scott for the early reply. One question - in a proposal what is a good length for the literature review - and should that review be more of a statement of what is covered rather than direct quotes and explanations - which would fit in the literature review proper and which I did with the paper you currently have.

Any advice welcomed.

Alan.
Hi Alan

For the initial proposal the lit review should draw briefly on examples and definitions from the relevant literature and briefly discuss these under three or four themes or headings. These should represent the main fields or Schools of thought that you intend to draw on in your thesis. They provide the conceptual basis for the study which should relate to your objectives, key questions and methodology for investigating the phenomenon you have identified as significant in terms of a contribution to new knowledge within the fields identified in the literature.

Cheers

Scott

Scott's classical approach to completing a research proposal, as laid down by the University handbook

Re: PhD Proposal
From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Tuesday, 29 July 2003 13:28
To: Scott Gardner
Subject: Re: PhD Proposal

Hi Scott,

I just dropped off my proposal at the University - I guess by the fact that I had to squeeze the envelope into your post box means that you are still away.

Anyway, get well soon and I will talk with you with you when you have had a chance to review what I have sent.

Regards,

Alan.

Re: PhD proposal/lunch
From: Scott Gardner
Sent: Tuesday, 9 September 2003 19:02
To: Byrne, Alan
Subject: Re: PhD proposal/lunch

Hi Alan

Apologies for cutting and running on Monday. Hope you enjoyed the lunch.

When you have time to tweak your proposal mail it through as I have mentioned it to Llandis and would like to walk him through it with a view to co-supervision.

regards

Scott
This was the first such tweaking of what I thought was a completed research proposal. At this stage Scott had not agreed to be the supervisor and was still suggesting supervisors.

From: Alan Byrne  
To: Scott Gardner  
Sent: Wednesday, September 10, 2003 8:29 AM  
Subject: Re: PhD proposal/lunch

Thanks Scott,

I had a quick look at Actor Network Theory - in terms of cooperation it seems to indicate that it would be influenced by many factors within the organisation.

However to do it some credit I would have to do a fair bit of reading on the topic - time I don't have right now - but I would be prepared to cover it in the literature review. So do I just mention it, or leave it out or what do you suggest?

I also assume you’re "what?" and "how?" comments were rhetorical - suggesting the order of the study?

I will 'tweak' and put something together.

Regards,

Alan.

From this e-mail you can see I am being guided in making my application more mainstream, more legitimate. I have begun to struggle with pigeon holing my thoughts into some type of existing theory, but my focus is on obtaining funding to do the PhD.

What follows is my original PhD proposal. As I now have no intention of divulging the name of the industry I work in, nor the company I work for, I have removed any identifying names or descriptions. Other than this little has been altered.
1.2 CO-OPERATION AMONGST PEOPLE IN ORGANISATIONS: AN EVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVE

1.2.1 RESEARCH TITLE

Co-operation amongst people in organisations: an evolutionary perspective.

1.2.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

The research objectives are to:

   Explore why co-operation evolves between people in organisations with a focus on change

   Examine how co-operation can be facilitated within and between organisations, in the promotion of change

   Develop a conceptual model of co-operation for change within and between organisations

1.2.3 PROPOSED RESEARCH DESIGN

The research proposed will operate within the phenomenological paradigm.

The first stage of the research will be a review of the existing literature on co-operation between living organisms, why co-operation evolves and how such co-operation is promoted leading to change. The theoretical framework proposed for such a review is evolution, incorporating biological, social and psychological evolution. This framework will be complemented by a focus on planned and emergent change.

The primary methodology will be exploratory case studies, and it is proposed that the research will consist of three stages.

Stage 1: Stage one will explore co-operation amongst the unit of analysis and other companies within the industry network. Organisations within this industry consist of corporatised, Government and private companies. To enable survival of companies within the industry each company must co-operate. Co-operation within each company will also be explored. Data gathering for this exploratory case study will primarily be by semi-structured interviews, which will facilitate the discovery of different aspects of co-operation. These interviews will be conducted face-to-face and via telephone and electronic medium. From these interviews questions will be designed allowing the completion of a questionnaire which will provide data from a larger sample.

Stage 2: Stage two will explore the phenomenon of co-operation between different industries in an industrial network. The case study identified is an industrial network in Kalundborg, Denmark, made famous for the symbiotic nature of the relationships
between the various industries within the network. The intention of including this unit of analysis into the research is to triangulate the data gathered from the main unit of analysis. Data gathering will be via questionnaire, developed in Stage one and electronic medium.

Stage 3: This stage will bring together the data gathered in stages 1 and 2 in the development of a conceptual model of co-operation, detailing why co-operation evolves in organisations and how such co-operation can be actively promoted leading to the emergence of positive, stakeholder oriented organisational change.

The researcher’s experience will facilitate making contacts and conducting data gathering within the unit of analysis. Contact has also been established with the Industrial Symbiosis Network Committee in Kalundborg, and they have indicated their willingness to assist where possible.

1.2.4 EXPECTED RESEARCH OUTCOME

This research is expected to contribute to the ongoing debate between mechanistic and organic organisations. Competition is very much the child of the mechanistic parent, whilst co-operation is more aligned with the organic metaphor of organisation type. By examining how people co-operate to change organisations through an informal network and that their interaction is through communication, the study seeks to contribute to a better understanding of how such co-operative interaction can be promoted and facilitated.

This understanding will be facilitated by a conceptual model generated through a synthesis of relevant literature and data generated by the investigative process. It is intended that the model will inform future practice and provide a framework for generating new knowledge in the field of management.
1.2.5 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

Evolution is about change. Pinker (1997) defines evolution as the changes in species over time. This preliminary literature review will examine why living organisms co-operate and how such co-operation evolves.

1.2.5.1 LIVING ORGANISMS CO-OPERATING TO CHANGE

1.2.5.1.1 CLASSICAL, SOCIAL AND NEO DARWINISM

Natural selection sets out that any living organism that has a characteristic that helps them to survive and reproduce will replace those that do not have this characteristic (Nicholson, 2000). Darwin believed all living organisms had a common ancestry and that changes in species were due to chance variation. Those variations that enabled the organism to survive were passed on to future generations via heredity; it was survival-of-the-fittest (Capra, 1983; 1997). Natural selection was an inevitable consequence of the competitive breeding of organisms subject to limited resources (Cohen & Stewart, 1994).

Margulis and Dolan (2002) demonstrate that evolutionists in the 19 and 20 centuries emphasised the competitive theme of Darwin’s work, namely survival-of-the-fittest. Sahtouris (1999) explains that classical Darwinian evolutionary theory has influenced science and shaped the human outlook and way of life. It has been applied to form a society and a social system designed in accord with and justified by the classical Darwinian concept of nature as red-in-tooth-and-claw. Social Darwinists, who espouse the struggle for existence and the survival-of-the-fittest, support this view. This has led to a competition-oriented culture being consistently promoted and rewarded.

Neo-Darwinists disagreed with heredity as the means of copying biological characteristics, instead asserting that all evolutionary variation results from random mutation through random genetic changes. Evolution was seen as driven by pure chance followed by natural selection.

1.2.5.1.2 SYMBIOSIS

According to Capra (2002) transitions in nature were caused by mechanisms quite different from the random mutations of neo-Darwinist theory and the theory of symbiosis seems to have played a critical role in those transitions. Margulis and Dolan (2002) defined symbiosis as:

“The intimate living together of two or more organisms, called symbionts, of different species. According to the symbiotic theory of the origin of eukaryotes, once independent microbes came together, first casually as separate organisms that fused, integrated, and then remained together by necessity. Eventually, originally independent organisms became organelles of new kinds of cells”. (Margulis & Dolan, 2002, P.6).
Symbiogenesis was the evolutionary term used by Margulis and Dolan (2002) that referred to new cells, new species, new tissue or organs that arise when symbioses become permanent, a main avenue of evolution for all higher organisms. The theory of symbiogenesis is supported by the recent mapping of the human genome which showed that many human genes had their origins from bacteria.

### 1.2.5.1.3 SELF-ORGANISATION

Further questioning Neo-Darwinian thinking that evolution is due to chance, Capra (1983; 1997; 2002) illustrates the self-organisation of living systems at the genetic level. Capra (2002) points to recent discoveries by biologists. It has been discovered that the fidelity of DNA is not always maximised, there seems to be mechanisms that actually generate copying errors by relaxing some of the monitoring processes. Of particular interest is that these mutation rates can be increased depending on the organism and the conditions in which the organism finds itself. There appears to be a balance in every living organism between genetic stability and mutability. This finding has major implications for evolutionary theory. The neo-Darwinian view of DNA is that it is an inherently stable molecule subject to occasional random mutations. Consequently evolution is seen as driven by pure chance, followed by natural selection. As Capra surmises

“The new discoveries in genetics will force biologists to adopt the radically different view that mutations are actively generated and regulated by the cell's epigenetic network, and that evolution is an integral part of the self-organisation of living organisms” (Capra, 2002, p146).

Capra (2002) sees these recent advances in genetics and microbiology (symbiogenesis) as a dramatic shift away from the neo-Darwinist emphasis on chance and necessity to a systems view that sees evolutionary change as a manifestation of life's self-organisation. Stacey (1997) also disagreeing with Neo-Darwinists states that evolution is not merely a process of random mutation at the level of the genes which are then selected out by competition. Random mutation is not the only generator of variety, self-organisation is itself generating variety.

Stacey (1997) states that within complex adaptive systems components (agents) interact with each other. The configuration of the relationships between the components is arranged in a network fashion, and the relationships are non-linear. Capra (1997) refers to autopoiesis as a network pattern where the function of each component is to participate in the production of or transformation of other components in the network, so that the network continually remakes itself. All components of such a network are produced by other components in the network. The organism operates continually far from equilibrium, yet is outwardly stable. The overall structure is maintained in spite of the continual changes and replacements of its components. The system responds to environmental disturbances by referring to itself (Wheatley, 1993). Whatever future form the system takes will be consistent with its already established identity. Therefore changes do not occur randomly in any direction. They are consistent with what has gone on before with the history and identity of the system (Wheatley, 1993). Therefore the entire living system is organisationally closed, meaning that although the living system interacts with the environment, the interaction does not determine the systems pattern of organisation.
Prigogine (cited in Wheatley, 1993, p.88, cited in ) refers to the openness of living systems as dissipative structures. Here the living system interacts with the environment through a continual flow of energy and matter, and the structure is open to that interaction. Wheatley (1993) believes that to remain viable an open system must maintain a state of non-equilibrium which keeps the system off balance allowing it to change and grow. There is active exchange between these systems and their environment. Maturana and Varela (cited in Capra, 2002, p. 31, p.103) assert that when it comes to interaction with the environment, you cannot direct a living system, you can only disturb it. As it matures and stabilises it becomes more efficient in the use of its resources and better able to exist within its environment. A basic structure is established which supports the development of the system. This structure insulates the system from constant reactive changes to the environment. The living system will decide what to notice and what to ignore. Once disturbed there is an active network of communications with multiple feedback loops to amplify the triggering event. When this becomes a point of instability the system either breaks down or breaks through to a “new state of order characterised by novelty” and creativity (Maturana and Varela, cited in Capra, 2002, p.103). Stacey (1993) agrees that the amplification of environmental disturbances can shatter existing behaviour patterns. Creative systems pass through states of instability or crisis and reach critical points where they may spontaneously self-organise to produce some new structure or behaviour. The choice made at these points is unpredictable.

The order and behaviour of the living system are not dictated by the environment but are established by the system itself making it organisationally closed and self-organising. Capra (1983; 1997) sees a living system as a self-organising system. Kauffman and Goodwin (cited in Stacey, 2000, p290) believe that it is self-organisation not random mutation that played the central role in the emergence of new forms.

“The evolution of life in the universe does not occur primarily through random mutations selected for survival by the process of competition, but primarily through an internal, spontaneously self-organising, co-operative process that presents orderly forms for selection by the forces of competition…Life in the universe, and life in organisations, arises from a dialectic between competition and cooperation, not from an unconstrained competition”. (Stacey, 2000, p.291).
1.2.5.2 FACTORS PROMOTING CO-OPERATION BETWEEN LIVING ORGANISMS

1.2.5.2.1 CO-OPERATION


“Cells beginning with those of bacteria were built up from other cells to make even larger more complex cells. The cell is the unit, the minimal unit of life. Partnerships between cells once foreign and even enemies of each other are at the very root of our human being” (Margulis & Dolan, 2002, p.140).

Thus organisms, once in competition, co-operated with each other in order to ensure survival. Axelrod (1990, p190) reflects “The key to doing well lies not in overcoming others (competition) but in eliciting their co-operation”. This is a view supported by Capra who believes that a major characteristic of living organisms is to “associate, establish links, live inside one another and co-operate” (Capra, 1983, p.301). Studies of ecosystems have shown that most relationships between living organisms are essentially co-operative ones, characterised by coexistence and interdependence, symbiotic in various degrees. Continual co-operation and mutual dependence between life forms was and is essential to evolution, unlike the competition in nature favoured by Social Darwinists (Capra, 1997).

1.2.5.2.2 CO-OPERATION FACTORS

1.2.5.2.2.1 INTERCONNECTION AND INTERDEPENDENCE OF LIVING SYSTEMS

The interconnection and interdependence of all living systems ensures co-operation is required for long term survival and change. Gaia hypothesis proposed by Lovelock (1987) is that the biosphere is a self-regulating entity with the capacity to keep our planet healthy by controlling the chemical and physical environments. Gaia theory analyses the Earth as a self-organising living system. Margulis and Dolan (2002) believe that the more we learn about the Earth the clearer it is that the planets surface has been highly altered by the origin, evolution and growth of life upon it. In agreement with Lovelock (1987; 1990) they see that as life increases it changes the composition, temperature and chemical nature of the atmosphere, and the composition, texture and diversity of the Earth's surface. The atmosphere and the surface of the Earth have been co-evolving for nearly four billion years and continue to present conditions suitable for life to exist. Capra states

“Evolution cannot be limited to the adaptation of organisms to their environment because the environment itself is shaped by a network of living systems capable of adaptation and creativity. They co-evolve”. (Capra, 1997, p.222).
Margulis and Dolan (2002) agree with this view and relate how the Earth's environment set the evolutionary processes in motion and then was transformed by them as the life-forms in it changed.

The interdependency of all living systems is explored further by Capra (1983). Capra traces Descartes and the Cartesian view of nature, as mechanical and reductionist, through to Quantum Physics which led to science understanding that you cannot break the world up into independently existing smaller units. Rather nature appears “as a complicated Web of relations between the various parts of a unified whole” (Capra, 1983, p.70). This brought about a shift in scientific research from objects to relationships. Moving away from a reductionist, object centered approach, Capra (1983, p.287) proposes a systems view, which

“...looks at the world in terms of relationships and integration. Systems are integrated wholes whose properties cannot be reduced to those of smaller units...all natural systems are wholes whose specific structures arises from the interactions and interdependence of their parts...The nature of the whole is always different from the mere sum of their parts”. Capra (1997, p.28) builds on this concept by stating “An outstanding property of all life is the tendency to form multi-leveled structures of systems within systems. Each of these forms a whole with respect to its parts, while at the same time being a part of a larger whole”.

This idea is similar to that expressed by Sahtouris. Whilst every cell looks out for itself, the organ it is part of also has self-interest, as does the body in which the organ resides. There is self-interest at each level of the living system. Sahtouris states that “self-interest at every level leads to negotiations that bring about co-operation and well being in the whole system” (Sahtouris, 1999, Chapter 16, p. 10). Nature works out a dynamic balance between self-interest and interest beyond self. Nature, according to Sahtouris (1999), teaches us that evolution depends on competition and co-operation, on independence and interdependence.

1.2.5.2.2 PROMOTING CO-OPERATION

Referring to social insects Randerson (2003) outlines that co-operation allows division of labour and mutual benefit. Stewart (2000) adds that co-operative organisations provide combinations which often have new features that their components do not and prevents the harmful effects of destructive competition. Given the advantages of co-operative behaviour, Stewart (2000) poses the question; what are the barriers? Even though every living organism is a co-operative organisation of smaller-scale living processes, few animals co-operate with each other. Generally natural selection will only produce features in animals that benefit the individual and generally individuals will not co-operate unless it pays them to do so. Stewart asserts that “Co-operation emerges only where evolution discovers how to build co-operative organisations out of self-interested components” (Stewart, 2000, p.28). To exploit the benefits of co-operation groups of organisms have to evolve the ability to be able to find the most useful forms of co-operation, and change them as conditions change. The better they are at discovering effective co-operation the better they will do in evolutionary terms.
1.2.5.2.2.2.1 EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL MANAGEMENT

In looking to expand further on promotion of co-operation between organisms Stewart states,

“Whenver complex co-operation has been able to evolve, it is because co-operators have been able to capture the effects on others of their actions. As a result, self-interest has driven them to treat the other as self” (Stewart, 2000, p.36).

This can happen if another individual takes action to ensure it happens. The entity or team of entities (the Managers) who organise the group must have control over the group, and it must have power to control and manage the individuals who make up the group. Stewart (2000) then goes on to look at cells and how they controlled the bacteria within them by preventing the bacteria from leaving them. Now if the bacteria followed its self interest rather than that of the cell it would be disadvantaged, therefore it was to its advantage to co-operate, and to the advantage of the cell. Co-operators capture the benefits of their effects on the host, and non-cooperators capture the harm they cause.

According to Stewart

“Controls that are best at promoting co-operation will win evolutionary struggles… evolution will adapt the controls to find better ways to support co-operation and to prevent cheats and free riders from escaping control as they evolve” (Stewart, 2000, p.41).

Frank (2003) in support of this point states that there are two ways that the host can repress symbiont competition and increase co-operative behaviour. The host may firstly directly block competitive symbiont behaviours that are not good for the host. Secondly the host can reduce the correlation between the competitive characters of the symbiont and symbiont reproductive success. The basic idea that repression of competition within groups can enhance group success in competition against other groups is seen by Frank as fundamental in the shaping of social behaviour and the structuring of complex groups (Frank, 2003).

However not all complex co-operative organisations have separate managers that control cheats and free riders (Stewart, 2000). With other organisms the source of management is internal to each of them. Each and every member of the group contains a copy of the manager, so for example if an individual hurts others in the group, it hurts the copies of the manager they contain. The manager may be a set of norms and moral codes or a particular gene (kinship theory). Stewart points to the evolution of insect societies and of multicellular organisms to illustrate how internal management can control and organise a group of living processes to suppress competition and promote co-operation. For Stewart (2000) co-operation is widespread only because it has been able to defeat non-co-operation in evolutionary struggle.
1.2.5.2.2.3 KINSHIP THEORY

A genes eye view of co-operation is examined by Axelrod (1990) and Stewart (2000). They analyse William Hamilton's (cited in Stewart, 2000, p.32) theory of genetical kin selection as the promoter of co-operation and altruism in living organisms. Dawkins (cited in Axelrod, 1990, p.89) states that “almost all clear cases of altruism, and most observed co-operation occur in contexts of high relatedness, usually between immediate family members”. This explanation of altruism is taken up by Cronin (1991) who says of classical Darwinian thinking

“Natural selection is demanding, exacting, relentless. It is intolerant of weakness, indifferent to suffering. It favours the hardy, the resilient, the healthy. One might expect organisms shaped by such a force to bear its stamp, to suffer in its own image…expect them to be locked in struggle, pursuing their own interests, uncaring of others. Natural selection would surely see off chivalrous self-sacrifice. Selfishness should win the day” (Cronin, 1991, p253).

However for Cronin this does not explain altruism. Kin selection and reciprocity are put forward as explanations of altruism. With kin selection the organism gives help to its relatives, even though the help is costly to the organism itself. The closer the kin the more likely the organism is to share. What if the beneficiaries are not the animals' kin? Reciprocity means that the participants could be exchanging altruistic favours in such a way that each is better off by co-operating than it would be by not co-operating. This is a view shared by evolutionary psychologists such as Nicholson (2000).

Nicholson (2000) asserts that there has been much misleading use of the red-in-tooth-and-claw imagery associated with classical Darwinism. He contends that whilst our genes may be selfish, that have to program us to be unselfish enough to co-operate with nonkin as well as kinfolk. Nicholson sets out those conditions that lead to unselfish behaviour. For example unselfishness comes about quite easily in the communal world of a clan of fairly fixed membership. Within this clan each member knows one another and shares a common fate with them. It makes sense for sharing norms to be developed. Nicholson (2000) states that food sharing is the prototype of altruism.

“The instinct to share is not the product of intellectual reasoning, as species without our brains or language gifts do the same: vampire bats, for example, share their surplus of cattle blood with nonkin who have had a lean nights hunting” (Nicholson, 2000, p.183).

The basis of such co-operation is seen as reciprocation sometime in the future. In a reference to kinship theory Randerson (2003) reveals that with vampire bats sharing food only happens between related individuals or bats that frequently hang from neighbouring perches. A crucial feature of that interaction is seen to be that the benefit to the recipient is more beneficial to the recipient than to the donor.
1.2.5.2.2.4 INSTINCT

Cosmides and Tooby (1997b) refer to the evolutionary theory of social exchange, sometimes called co-operation, reciprocal altruism or reciprocation. They see social exchange as being an ancient, pervasive and central part of human social life. Cosmides and Tooby state that

“Social exchange cannot evolve in a species or be stably sustained in a social group unless the cognitive machinery of the participants allows a potential cooperator to detect individuals who cheat, so that they can be excluded from future interactions in which they would exploit co-operators” (Cosmides & Tooby, 1997b, p.94).

Nicholson (2000) puts forward the idea that humans have instinctive co-operation. Primates for example, have a rule of engagement that the best way to deal with a stranger is on the ‘as if’ principle. This is the assumption that you are both from the same tribe. There is more to gain from co-operation than conflict. In the closed communities of the hunters-gatherers it paid to be honest and co-operative. According to Nicholson

“It is this program that tells us to smile at strangers and then see what they do before deciding whether to go on being nice. It is prudent co-operation, kindness with justice, warmth with toughness. It is treating strangers “as if” they were part of our community” (Nicholson, 2000, p.193).

The further we depart from a sense of community, the more crime increases. Cosmides and Tooby (1997a) state that the environment that humans evolved in was very different from today. Human ancestors spent well over 99% of the human species evolutionary history living in hunter-gatherer societies. The human species lived as hunter-gatherers 1000 times longer than anything else. Hence Cosmides and Tooby (1997a) surmise that it is easier for us to deal with small sized groups of people. Nicholson (2000) believes that some of humans’ most crucial mental models are designed for survival in a world where there is a possibility that people will act deviantly. These mental models include the human ability to conceal feelings when interacting with each other, and the sensitivity to cues that others might be cheating us. However humans generally prefer to co-operate and share. Nicholson points out that psychologists have carried out experiments that have shown that most people will turn down opportunities to cheat strangers for personal gain, even where there is no chance of retribution.

1.2.5.2.2.5 SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

Axelrod (1990) utilises game theory (the Prisoner's Dilemma) to come up with the factors he believed were necessary for co-operation between people. The combination of being nice, retaliatory, forgiving and clear was introduced. Niceness prevents you from getting into trouble. Retaliation discourages the other side from persisting whenever they try to defect. Forgiveness helps restore mutual co-operation, and clarity makes you intelligible to the other side, thereby eliciting long-term co-operation. Axelrod (1990, p.60) further stated that long term interaction is important for the stability of co-operation. “It is easier to maintain the norms of reciprocity in a stable small town or ethnic neighbourhood” where the individuals have even a small proportion of their interaction with each other. The role of time perspectives is also seen as critical in the maintenance of co-operation. If the interaction is likely to continue for
a long time and the people care enough about their future together, the conditions are ripe for the emergence and maintenance of co-operation (Axelrod, 1990). To sustain co-operation you must be able to recognise the person from previous interactions and remember the relevant features of those interactions.

Axelrod (1997) states that norms exist in a given social setting to the extent that individuals usually act in a certain way and are often punished when seen not to be acting in this way. The conditions favourable to the establishment of norms can promote co-operation where it might not otherwise exist. Axelrod sets out the mechanisms that support norms as; dominance, internalisation, deterrence, social proof, membership of a group, law, and finally reputation.

Capra (2002) states that in the living world the creativity of life expresses itself through the process of emergence. Prior to the evolution of humans all living structures on the planet were emergent structures with no design. In non-human nature there is no purpose or intention. With human evolution came language, conceptual thought and other reflective consciousness characteristics. This enabled humans to create structures by design, which requires the ability to form mental images. Designed structures are represented by the formal structures of human organisations. Emergent structures are represented by the organisations informal networks. Looking at the formal and informal organisation, Stacey (2003b) says that the identity of the formal organisation is defined in terms of the formal relationships of the members of the organisation. The informal organisation comprises of all relationships not formally defined. Personal and social relationships fall into this category, extending into other organisations thereby making it difficult to define the membership (Stacey, 2003b).

Stacey (2003b) believes that it is through the informal organisation that organisational change takes place via a self-organised social process of communicative interaction between individuals. This process of communicative interaction is essentially social constructivism. Stacey (2003b) refers to process thinking, where people are not thought of as parts producing a system but rather as people in relationships producing relationships, which produce them at the same time. From the perspective of process theory organisations are patterns of interaction between people. This interaction is primarily through language in the form of everyday conversation. In their relating to each other people become who they are, both individually and collectively. Referring to the concept of complex responsive process, where humans are continuously responding to each other, Stacey states

“…that strategy is the evolving pattern of collective and individual identities emerging in the ordinary, everyday local interactions between people” (Stacey, 2003b, p.358).

In writing on complexity Waldrop (1994) stated that all complex systems are a great many independent agents interacting with each other in a great many ways. Stacey (2003b) explores the insights complexity theory provides to human relationships, in particular the emergence of new relationships. There is no guarantee of survival of these new relationships due to competitive selection. Interaction between people is seen by Stacey as being self-organising

“…in that meaningful patterns emerge in local interactions between people in the living present, in the absence of any prior design, blueprint or plan” (Stacey, 2003b, p389).
Strategies emerge in the ongoing conversational life within an organisation and between people in different organisations.

1.2.5.3 SUMMARY

Analysing how living systems have co-operated to survive and change provides an organic framework within which to develop co-operative strategies for human organisations. The most obvious hurdle to overcome is the current mechanistic, overly competitive paradigm of Management. This paradigm is represented by Cartesian, Newtonian and Darwinian type thinking, leading to reductionism, linear thinking, survival-of-the-fittest and the concept of the human organisation as a machine. As Capra points out

“The view of the universe as a mechanical system composed of elementary building blocks has shaped our perception of nature, of the human organism, of society and thus also of the business organisation” (Capra, 2002, p.89).

This paradigm has also greatly influenced organisational strategies. Stacey refers to conventional strategic thinking as Strategic choice theory which is

“...built on a systemic notion of interaction in which organisations adapt to their environments in a self-regulating, negative-feedback (cybernetic) manner so as to achieve their goals. The dynamics, or pattern of movement over time, is that of movement to states of stable equilibrium…The analysis is primarily at the macro level of the organisation in which cause and effect are related to each other in a linear manner” (Stacey, 2003b, p.409).

However there are networks of organisations that have adopted a more evolutionary co-operative approach to their change strategies, which by their nature may not be by design. The chosen industry is one such network and will be examined to determine why co-operation has evolved within the network and how it has been promoted.
Re: Proposal  
From: Scott Gardner  
Sent: Tuesday, 16 September 2003 16:21  
To: Byrne, Alan  
Subject: Re: Proposal

Attachments: PhDApplicationV5.doc

Hi Alan

The proposal is looking much more internally coherent than before. The contentious part that may need a little more clarity and defence i.e. "I am using this approach to investigate phenomenon x as it is appropriate for x reasons and more conventional positivist approaches and literatures are not because. The study will contribute new knowledge to field x due to the unique perspective afforded by the requisite lit fields from science, social science and management and the chosen investigative method". I have added a few changes to help you tighten up this side of things.

Also have a think about the broader systems advantages of cooperation with respect to all key stakeholders including your charity/grant beneficiaries and their communities. i.e. How to cooperate for optimal gain across the stakeholder network or constituency including social capital.

I can’t remember your exact time frame but you need to send your proposal in with a nominated supervisor and referees.

Use me as your supervisor for now but Richard or Llandis would be best. I will step down to co-supervisor. I suggest you copy this to Richard and LLandis- I have spoken to both and ask for comments/interest. Best ask Joy out of courtesy as she was asking if I had heard from you.

I am on Rotto next week so if required go with what you can get by the end of the week and send it in to the graduate School copied to me. If you can wait we can fine tune the following week.

cheers

Scott

So as it happened Scott’s name was entered as the supervisor. You can see from the e-mail that Scott was beginning to insist on more structure being applied to the application in order to make it more acceptable to the scholarship committee. I was more than willing to comply. The approach was pragmatic with a specific outcome in mind. The subversion in this approach was that I was going to have a clean slate to do what I wished once I had overcome the initial university hurdles of acceptance.
From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Tuesday, 16 September 2003 16:33
To: l.barratt_; r.mckenna; j.hocking
Subject: Proposal

Attachments: PhDApplicationV5.doc

Dear Joy, LLandis and Richard,

Please find attached a draft of a research proposal for a PhD. I would welcome any thoughts you may have in tightening or improving the attached document. I believe that Scott has spoken to each of you.

Thank you for your time.
Regards,
Alan Byrne.

As requested by Scott I sent copies of the application to two potential co-supervisors.

Re: Fw: PhD proposal/lunch
From: Scott Gardner
Sent: Sunday, 21 September 2003 13:27
To: Byrne, Alan
Cc: r.mckenna; l.barratt_pugh
Subject: Re: Fw: PhD proposal/lunch

Attachments: AB_PHD_prop2.doc

Dear colleagues

Perhaps we can counter the trend towards fragmentation and reinforced mediocrity in our workplace by taking on Alan's thesis as a kind of synthesis of our respective favourite theories. (Alan please see my additional thoughts/highlights).

Cooperation, actor networks, and social capital strike me as a potentially good fit.

Perhaps you would like to throw some ideas(track changes) in Alan's direction as prospective co-supervisors is there is word for a three way supervisory arrangement other than risky?

Enjoy your weekend and have malt and a red respectively but not together, on me.

regards

Scott

Here Scott is highlighting the multi-disciplinary nature of my application, implying there is a bit of everything in there for several supervisors. This was to come back and haunt me later on as I was seen to be covering too big an area of study.
Hi Scott and Charlie,

Just to thank you for being academic referees (Charlie I hope you don't mind, I have been trying to talk with you).

Please ensure you get the forms sent in ASAP. The deadline for receipt by Mount Lawley is 30-10-2003.

Kind regards,

Alan.

Re: Academic referees
From: Scott Gardner
Sent: Tuesday, 30 September 2003 11:32
To: Byrne, Alan
Subject: Re: Academic referees

No problem Alan

Have spoken to Charlie and he has agreed.

Espana por favor

cheers

Scott

I organised the two referees required, both lecturers in the MBA programme I had recently completed.

From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Thursday, 26 February 2004 17:04
To: Scott Gardner
Subject: On Board

Hi Scott,

I have paid my 'service fee' I'm registered and ready to go. So where to from here. I have reviewed material and now believe there is a subject area, namely 'Corporate Anthropology'.

Ties in with changing organisations to reflect human instinct (evolutionary psychology) and culture and customs from other times (Anthropology). However it is not a means to understand what is going on, rather one to promote productivity and job satisfaction through for example working in smaller groups, choosing leaders according to requirements, co-operating more with other groups, socialising in the workplace and enjoying work more.
Anyway looks like if this is the way forward, I would need to talk with some anthropologists. Looks like a fairly new area with the focus being on corporations and human behaviour.

Let me know when we can meet up to discuss, or instruct me as to what I must do next.

Regards,

Alan.

I'm in. Finally I get the news that I have received a PhD unit scholarship. Filled with enthusiasm I continue my search to compartmentalise my thoughts into a more focused research area.

Re: Meeting 18-3-2004
From: Scott Gardner
Sent: Monday, 22 March 2004 11:23
To: Byrne, Alan
Cc: p.johansen
Subject: Re: Meeting 18-3-2004

Hi Alan
Glad to be of help. There is a good project in there waiting to get out.

From: Alan Byrne
Hi Scott and Per,

Thank you for your valuable input today, I feel much better about the road ahead. I was concerned that the project I proposed was going to be too difficult to undertake and too wide in its objectives.

I am warming to the idea of Knowledge creation within organisations

Whilst I am under no illusions as to the difficulty of the task, my approach feels like it is on stronger ground than it was yesterday.

Regards,

Alan.

Here I started to change focus, realising that it was going to be very difficult to research an industrial park in Denmark, even with the co-operation of the centre’s management. Following discussion with Scott and Per (another former lecturer and now co-supervisor) I began to take an epistemological stance, examining knowledge creation within organisations.
2 THE CONTINUATION...

What follows is my search for meaning.

2.1 E-MAILS 22\textsuperscript{ND} MARCH 2004 – 27 JULY 2005

From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Monday, 22 March 2004 11:42  
To: snowded  
Subject: Introduction

Dear Mr. Snowden,

My name is Alan Byrne. I have just commenced a PhD.

The area I am focusing on is Knowledge Creation within an organisation. I am particularly interested in evolutionary psychology and anthropology as a framework for understanding how humans are and how organisations can better organise to enable knowledge creation through for example the use of story which historically is the way humans passed on knowledge. I believe in the organic type organisation rather than the more accepted mechanical type. Essentially organisations are just groups of people in a social setting who get by through communication.

I have come across several references to yourself on the Internet and what you have to say makes sense to me.

Which brings me to the point of this e-mail. I am hopeful that you might be able to supply me with some more information. I note you do seminars within IBM, such as ‘Story telling: an old skill in a new context. Practical techniques for knowledge disclosure, communication and cultural intervention in a new age of uncertainty’. Is there any chance of getting these notes?

I have come to this point through reading books on Gaia (Lovelock), Symbiosis (Margulis), Evolutionary Psychology, Quantum Physics and more general books on Human Evolution. For some time I have been interested in the use of analogy and metaphor (Lissack) and how humans use language to communicate.

I would greatly appreciate any assistance you can provide as I acknowledge your contribution to further increasing my understanding of a very interesting area.

Please let me know if I can provide you with any further information.

Kind regards,

Alan Byrne.
In this e-mail to David Snowden I begin to look at narrative, story telling as the means by which knowledge is created in organisations. I also continue to hold onto the evolutionary focus.

From: Dave Snowden  
Sent: Friday, 26 March 2004 00:39  
To: Byrne, Alan  
Cc: shawn Callahan  
Subject: Re: Introduction  
Attachments: march mailer.zip

Nice to hear from you and I've attached a set of articles that may provide what you were looking for. We are creating academic and other network linkages in Australia and I will be out late May/June doing some more training - Shawn is the contact for this and I have copied him on this e-mail.

Dave Snowden  
Director  
Canolfan Cynefin Centre  
IBM Global Services

From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Wednesday, 31 March 2004 09:32  
To: Dave Snowden  
Subject: Acknowledgement

Hello David,

Thank you for the articles you sent, I appreciate you taking the time to respond to my request.

I am just starting this journey and it is great to have support from someone as eminent in their field as yourself. As I get further down the line I hope you don't mind if I contact you again for clarification of issues or just to run an idea by you.

Regards,

Alan.

From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Monday, 5 April 2004 11:12  
To: Dave Snowden  
Subject: SNS technique

Hello David,

I enjoyed reading the articles you sent me. If it is OK with you my supervisor has requested an electronic copy.

I am beginning to develop the boundaries of my study and I am currently thinking about the framework. FYI I am looking at knowledge creation in organisations. The
framework is premodern, modern and postmodern paradigms. I belong in the later and parts of premodern.

My attention is being drawn to social networks as a possible focus. I note from one of your papers, 'The knowledge you need, right when you need it' (KMR V5, J6 Jan/Feb 2003) that a technique paper on SNS is available from yourself. Could I get a copy?


Is it possible to analyse social networks through the use of Story/narrative?

I have much to learn but the subject area fits with my own beliefs of what an organisation is - being first and foremost about people and their social interactions.

Regards,
Alan Byrne.

From my exchanges with David Snowden I begin to cover up with my security blanket of quantifiable, objective research. The language is closer to my work experience and infinitely applicable, belaying the struggle associated with more extreme forms of interpretative study. I was comfortable with a more quantifiable, applicable research methodology. Social networks could be identified, mapped and researched. No messiness there, just nice clean computer friendly work.

From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Monday, 5 April 2004 12:13
To: r.d.stacey
Subject: Introduction

Dear Professor Stacey,

My name is Alan Byrne; I am originally from Ireland but now live in Western Australia. I have made contact with you before, whilst I was completing an MBA at Edith Cowan University. It was your book on Strategy that I was introduced to in my first unit and which subsequently influenced by focus in the units that followed.

I have now commenced a PhD, and I am again reading your papers/books together with those of David Snowden. I am currently deciding upon the framework and the focus. I am looking at knowledge creation within an Industry. The framework may be the premodern, modern and postmodern paradigms; the focus is fast becoming social networks and their contribution to knowledge exchange/creation. I am particularly interested in what you have to say about the emergence of these networks, their value and how you might 'research' them.

I would appreciate any direction/materials you have that you are willing to share.
Kind regards,
Alan Byrne.
This approach to Professor Stacey showed I was beginning to get more confident in my research. Earlier on I was concerned at exposing my limitations to such a revered academic. I also make mention of the knowledge framework I had developed (see Figure 2) and was of the belief that humans were best suited to pre-modern forms of knowledge creation such as story telling. I was showing an early interest in human interaction through language, though in a different context.

From: Dave Snowden
Sent: Monday, 5 April 2004 17:29
To: Byrne, Alan
Subject: Re: SNS technique

The SNS paper is held up at the moment due to some difficult IBM politics that its too tedious to go into but which should be resolved by the end of April We also use narrative to reveal informal communities, on which we then use SNA type techniques All complicated - may be best to talk on the phone or when I am out in Australia at the end of May/early June (I will be in Sydney and Melbourne)

Dave Snowden
Director
Canolfan Cynefin Centre
IBM Global Services

From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Tuesday, 6 April 2004 10:56
To: Dave Snowden
Subject: Re: SNS technique

Thanks for that David. I will continue to read on. It would be great to talk with you when you come to Australia. It's a pity this country is so big, as I am tucked away in the West some 5 hours flying time from Melbourne/Sydney. Nevertheless where there is a will there is a way.
Office politics is not my forte so I wish you well in dealing with it.

I am excited to know that you can use narrative to reveal informal communities. This is definitely an area I would like to pursue.

I look forward to further communication in the near future.

Regards,

Alan.
Hi Scott,

Find attached the papers from David Snowden. Making good progress with the map looks like the focus will be social networks. David uses narrative to reveal informal communities within organisations, then uses Social Network Analysis on this information.

I will talk with him when he arrives in Australia in May/June, but I like the look of his approach for research.

Alan.

>Hi Alan

Thanks for the files

Sounds exciting.

Will be talking to a pal in Scotland who does KM consulting so will see if I can get the latest.

I will also send you a theory and practice progression diagram which summarises our conversation about the limitations of positivism in practice, and in my view the lack of answers from post modernism, with KM may offering some avenue for progress.

regards

Scott

Scott is much happier with the type of research related to the work of someone like David Snowden, in particular its applicability in the workplace. In the initial phases there is also a sense of relief that I seem to have a solid (read generally acceptable) research focus.
From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Tuesday, 6 April 2004 11:45
To: Karen Stephenson
Subject: SNA

Dear Professor Stephenson,

My name is Alan Byrne. I am originally from Ireland, but now reside in Western Australia. I have commenced a PhD through Edith Cowan University, and I am particularly interested in Knowledge creation through the informal networks within organisations. I have been reading David Snowden and Ralph Stacey, and recently came across one of your articles.

I am keen to learn more about social networks and how one can 'reveal' the hidden potential of the informal networks within organisations. David Snowden’s use of narrative as an analysis tool is very exciting, and I agree with your emphasis on trust which is more likely in the informal interpersonal relationships amongst people.

I would appreciate if you could send me any other articles you have written that might assist in my understanding of social networks and how they might be analysed.

Kind Regards,

Alan Byrne.

From: Karen Stephenson
Sent: Wednesday, 7 April 2004 17:15
To: Byrne, Alan
Subject: Re: SNA

Attachments: s+b.zip

I have enclosed an article in S+B. The actual methodology I do not give away in the article but only lightly touch on it. I will be Australia in May and we could meet if you would like to explore this further.

Karen Stephenson, Ph.D.

I read Dr. Stephenson's article in a magazine, and again was surprised by her willingness to engage me in conversation, and assist me by attaching an article she had worked on. The article further enforced the importance of informal social networks within organisations.
Dear Alan

The work you are proposing to do sounds very interesting. I am not sure that I have anything directly relevant but I attach 2 recent papers.

Regards
Ralph

---

Highly motivated and excited by Prof. Stacey’s response. He said what I am doing sounds interesting! It is obvious to me that I revere Prof. Stacey as his words have a greater impact on me than those of others.

Dear Professor Stacey,

Thank you for taking the time to reply to my e-mail and for the articles you sent. I have been doing a lot of reading in preparation for the research proposal. I am examining knowledge creation in the premodern, modern and postmodern era's. I am particularly interested in the use of narrative in knowledge exchange/creation and self-generating social networks.

If it's OK with you I would like to bounce some ideas off you or ask questions from time to time. As someone who's work I enjoy reading and thinking about such input from time to time would be invaluable to me.

Regards,
Alan Byrne.
Hi Scott,

Please find attached two interesting articles I was sent by Prof. Ralph Stacey. Seems like the use of narrative between people in self-generating social networks is going somewhere.

I also made contact with Prof. Karen Stephenson (you gave me a copy of her article). I was sent an electronic copy of that article.

Alan.

Hi Alan

Fertile ground indeed.

Some good stuff in here we just have to nail it down to a workable research agenda.

Catch you before I leave on May 5. We need a further directions talk. Remind me in one week please.

regards

Scott

Once again Scott emphasises the requirement to ‘nail down’ the work I was doing.
Hello Professor Stacey,

I read the articles you sent me and I have also been reading several of your books. I am a bit confused.

I want to understand what you are saying about the individual and the social being one and the same, and that knowledge lies in the pattern of relationships between an organisation's members. You have used Structuration Theory (Giddens) and the writings of Elias and Mead to show the paradox of the individual and the social, where the individual forms the social while at the same time being formed by it. The fact that both are present at the same time makes reference to Hegel's dialectical logic.

You see knowledge creation as a process of interaction, a patterning of communication. Knowledge is continuously replicated and potentially transformed in communicative interaction in local situations in the living present. This is the complex responsive process perspective.

My problem is I just don't get it. I have read and re-read but I have not yet taken the meaning, it has not clicked. In particular I struggle with the idea of patterning, identity and the individual and the social being one and the same. I also thought that by promoting interaction between people you would improve knowledge creation in the informal contact, however as you point out knowledge is created in the living present - so what can you do?

It may be that I have not devoted enough time and research to the area, however do you have an analogy/story that would explain it to me? The examples you use from time to time allow me to relate better to what follows or precedes. Is there a story or analogy that would paint a picture of what you are saying?

If not I will continue to read until I make meaning of your perspective.

Kind regards,

Alan Byrne.
Hi Allen

I think the key to understanding what I am saying lies in the thought of Mead so I suggest you look again at the places where I summarise what he is saying. I think his key question has to do with how we know. He seeks to explain just what it means to be conscious and self conscious. His argument runs like this. I can only know the likely consequences of my actions, of my gestures, if I have the physiological capacity to evoke in myself similar responses to those I evoke in you when I act towards you, that is, when I gesture to you. So if I shout at you, that could call forth a number of responses – you could shout back and then the meaning of what I am doing is anger or aggression. Or you could laugh at me – then the meaning could be contempt or dismissal. In other words the meaning does not lie in my gesture or word but in my gesture / word taken together with your response. Now since knowledge is meaning, it follows that meaning / knowledge can only arise between us, that is, it is social because social means the interaction between us. Now how can I know the meaning as, or just before, I gesture. I can only know if I have the capacity to evoke in my body similar responses to those my gesture evokes in your body. If I can do this I am conscious and then as I continue to engage with you I can learn more and more about what the responses are likely to be. So consciousness then is a kind of role play, in which I am privately playing out your responses to me. Since much of our gesturing and responding is in language it follows that the private role play takes the form of silent conversation. You see the sense of this if you just reflect on what you experience as your mind. I experienced a constant chatter with myself, sometime asking questions like ‘I wonder what he will do next?’ So mind is the action of a body directed back toward itself. The social is the action of bodies directed to each other. Both are the same kinds of actions of bodies and so both are the same process and they are going on at the same time. This is what I mean by saying social and individual are the same. Now as we interact in vocal conversation, at the same time engaging in silent conversation, themes of meaning emerge. So on one occasion the theme might be sadness because we are about to part. It is these themes, which take largely narrative forms, that constitute pattern and meaning / knowledge in human interaction.

I hope this helps.

Regards

Ralph

Wow! This helped clarify much for me and made me a committed Stacey fan. My focus at this stage was very much knowledge creation, falling on the side of meaning creation. I struggled to differentiate between the two.
From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Thursday, 29 April 2004 13:39  
To: r.d.stacey  
Subject: Re: Individual/Social

Hi Professor Stacey,

Thank you for taking the time to respond to my e-mail. You have clarified the links between what you are saying for me. I have now decided to have a read of G.H. Mead's 'Mind, Self and Society'. I came across a very useful Internet site with an on-line copy of this book.

You may already know about it but if not the site is 'http://spartan.ac.brocku.ca/~lward/mead_biblio.html'. There are also other related articles listed.

Regards,
Alan Byrne.

From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Thursday, 29 April 2004 14:04  
To: dboje  
Subject: Article request  
Dear Professor Boje,

My name is Alan Byrne, I am Irish but reside in Western Australia.

I have recently commenced a PhD at Edith Cowan University in Perth. I am examining knowledge exchange/creation in my own organisation through self-generative social networks. Narrative is to play a major role in the research. I have been reading Stacey, Snowden and yourself amongst others.

I want to look at knowledge from a premodern, modern and postmodern perspective, with a particular emphasis on the individual and the social (Stacey examining Mead to look at the individual and the social as being one and the same in the postmodern perspective).

You presented a paper titled 'Premodern, modern and postmodern: Are we moving forwards or backwards?' presented at the 21st conference of the European Group in Organisation Studies, Paris in 1993. It seems to me that knowledge creation is heading back to premodern ideals of how knowledge was created. Can I get a copy of this paper? I have looked on the Internet and have been unable to obtain a copy.

I would be much obliged if you can assist. Your breakdown into the three areas of premodern, modern and postmodern in the 'Tamara-Land' paper gave me the idea for the framework through which to examine knowledge exchange/creation.

Kind Regards,
Alan Byrne.
I came across Prof. David Boje when researching knowledge creation through the ages. He had authored a paper that was very much in line with how I was developing a framework for knowledge creation. Buoyed by my success in communicating with other academic luminaries I had no problem communicating with Prof. Boje.

From: David Boje  
Sent: Friday, 30 April 2004 07:35  
To: Byrne, Alan  
Subject: Re: Article request  
Send me your address and I will send you a copy

I would recommend as well the Narrative Methods book I wrote for Sage (2001)

there is a link to Amazon at http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0761965874/qid=996760152/sr=2-3/104-5347482-9721540

The book is being reprinted, and Sage will have more copies soon, for now only at Amazon.

Material at http://cbae.nmsu.edu/~dboje/qm/ may be useful to you. Basically for project you suggest, the "anti narrative" theory may work with ideas on complexity. I am working with folks at storymaker.org on a project that connects to Snowden's interest.

Anyway, let me know how I can be helpful

David

At 09:05 AM 4/30/2004 +0800, Alan Byrne wrote:

Hi Professor Boje,

Thank you very much for your timely reply.

The connection to David Snowden would be particularly interesting, it's a great pity that I am at the other side of the world but perhaps I can run some ideas by you when I get some more understanding of the areas I am looking at.

I will check out the links you sent me and have a read of your book.

Regards,

Alan.
I sent you the paper,

I wonder if sometime we might talk about Snowden vs my own perspective and work I am doing with

http://storymaker.org

david

Hello David,

Despite my best efforts the organisation will not send me to Sydney to hear you, but life goes on.

Recently, with references from Stacey I have been reading Mead and Elias who move away from the differentiation of the individual and the social.

This split in mainstream thinking has implications for how we see knowledge creation. According to Stacey ‘as we interact in vocal conversation, at the same time engaging in silent conversation, themes of meaning emerge’. Stacey classifies meaning as knowledge. Elias through his symbol theory accentuates the importance of vocal symbols together with reason and knowledge (Elias says all three exist together).

This leads me to my question. I am looking at knowledge/meaning creation from a post-modernist perspective. The unit of study is necessarily where I currently work. Is there a way of analysing this bureaucracy through conversations - showing that it is indeed a bureaucracy, following scientific management principles? The concept is to show that the people can create knowledge/meaning by changing their conversations (self-organised changes not imposed by anyone).

If you have any thoughts on this matter I would be grateful to hear them.

Regards,

Alan Byrne.

*Here I am attempting to marry the managerialist approach of Snowden with the non-managerialist approach of Stacey. I wanted to find a way of researching Stacey’s theory of Complex Responsive Processes of Relating and applying it to my current work environment.*
From: Dave Snowden  
Sent: Tuesday, 11 May 2004 23:53  
To: Byrne, Alan  
Subject: Re: Bureaucratic narrative for meaning  


Thanks for this and sorry you won’t make Sydney - I will see if I can stage via Perth, but it may be difficult Cilliers book Complexity and Post-Modernism might help you - although I don't buy the extremes of post modernism any more than I buy modernism. Contextual Complexity argues for a more balanced approach. Stacy I like, but think he too is too extreme suing complexity in his bid to rehabilitate Mead

The problem you raise is a basic one for narrative - I enclose a couple of articles. One of the things that we are paranoid about (which links with true post modernism) is the need to avoid expert interpretation in an narrative mapping process and some of the strategy work is also linked to mapping the legitimate terrain for bureaucracy.

Happy to set up a conversation on this if it’s any use  

Dave Snowden  
Director  
Canolfan Cynefin Centre  
IBM Global Services

Note here the language – ‘uses of narrative’, indicating that narrative can be used by management, very anti-Stacey.

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From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Wednesday, 12 May 2004 11:09  
To: Dave Snowden  
Subject: Re: Bureaucratic narrative for meaning  

Hi David,

Thank you for your prompt reply, and the attached articles. I have also made contact with David Boje whose book on narrative techniques I am picking up today (he has an interesting Internet site at http://cbae.nmsu.edu/~dboje/qm/).

I too find what Stacey has to say very interesting and the extremist in me is drawn to something different. However this is tempered by the need to provide some form of research. As discussed in a previous e-mail I want to show how knowledge is created in self-generating social networks (Capra), where narrative techniques are used to reveal these networks. I have found Mead difficult to read and find it even harder to conceptualise how Stacey's perspective can be researched, interesting though it is.
Currently I need to come up with a research proposal and I am 'scoping the project' by including/excluding different areas. I do believe the individual/social argument is critical in the area of knowledge creation, but I don't want to go too far down the psychological road as I am out of my depth. Would you be willing to share who you have read to inform yourself in this area, or what your thoughts are?

Kind Regards,

Alan Byrne.

I express my doubts of being able to research Stacey’s work. However terms like ‘social-networks’, ‘narrative research methodologies’ give me a degree of comfort that the task is manageable and that I can produce a coherent research proposal, acceptable to the academic authorities. I also recognise in this e-mail an extremist element in my own character drawing me to the unconventional. This came about as a consequence of reflecting on what it is about Stacey that appeals to me.

From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Wednesday, 12 May 2004 11:25  
To: David Boje  
Subject: Re: Article request  

Hi David,

I am picking up your book on Narrative techniques this evening. I have also been sent some interesting articles by David Snowden. As soon as I am comfortable with what he is proposing, I will make contact to discuss the perspective.

What are your thoughts on the individual/social paradox? Who has most informed your opinion? I believe that exploration of this area is crucial to understanding knowledge creation, but I don't want to go too far into the psychological reasoning as I feel a bit out of my depth.

Kind regards,

Alan Byrne.

From: David Boje  
Sent: Wednesday, 12 May 2004 23:26  
To: Byrne, Alan  
Subject: Re: Article request  

Hi Alan,

To me the most informed opinion is that of Bakhtin; he has explored the individual/social in the nine chronotopes in Dialogical Imagination.

I am going to share a review I am in the process of formulating on Snowden's work and its relation to my own, which is where I think you are heading. I will ask that you reference the review, if you use it in your work.
I hope you find it helpful, and would like to hear a dialogic response, as you accomplish your exploration. If you find the review interesting, I can send the whole essay.

david

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From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Thursday, 13 May 2004 09:24
To: David Boje
Subject: Re: Article request

Hi David,

Thank you very much for providing me with your work, and yes I would be obliged if you could send me the whole essay.

Reading critical reviews of other's work provides me with insight to that work, thereby increasing my understanding of what is being said. Snowden has some interesting things to say about Stacey, in particular Stacey's references to Mead (I tried to read Mead's book but found it hard going). I welcome the opportunity to read more on what you have to say about Snowden.

I picked up your book yesterday, and was immediately drawn to Story Network Analysis. I will read more on the weekend when I have time.

I appreciate your input and thoughts, it is helping me put together my thoughts and boundaries.

Kind regards,

Alan Byrne.

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From: David Boje
Sent: Thursday, 13 May 2004 23:34
To: Byrne, Alan
Subject: Re: Article request

Send me insights in to Stacey and Mead and I will send copy of essay

David
Hi Per,

I have been busy with looking at the unit of analysis (and how it can be researched).

I have exchanged several e-mails with Snowden, Boje and Stacey. The idea is to show through narrative analysis that the unit of analysis is a bureaucratic organisation and that this limits their knowledge creation which is fixed in a modernist functional/Descartes/scientific mgt/Taylorist paradigm. A postmodernist perspective will highlight an alternative view of knowledge creation and through narrative analysis the informal self-generating social networks will be identified.

David Boje has done a lot of work on narrative analysis, but it is difficult starting from scratch. Does anyone at ECU know how to do it?

I will be at ECU this morning/early afternoon and if you are there I will call in.

Snowden thinks Stacey is an extreme postmodernist, Boje thinks Snowden is a managerialist. Boje has a new article which examines the work of Snowden. He wants me to provide him with an insight into Stacey and Mead before providing it to me - you scratch your back etc. Might attempt some form of analysis over the weekend.

Alan.

Figure 2 is the knowledge creation framework I discussed with Scott and Per. It was the basis for my thesis and an attempt to overlay a structure on the project.
Figure 2: Knowledge Creation Early Thesis Framework. This represents my early ambition to show that knowledge creation is more aligned to pre-modern concepts of creating knowledge through personal interaction.
It looks like an interesting project. We have done work using narrative techniques to reveal social networks and have just completed the theoretical work to allow informal social networks to be stimulated by using different boundary/attractor conditions. This links with my position on the nature of research in social sciences which I do not think can (in other than very restricted circumstances) be hypothesis based, but needs to stimulate the space to see what patterns emerge and then reflect - Emergent Participative Action Research. I'd be happy to talk about letting you have some of the narrative software we use to reveal patterns and share some of the methods for extracting identities from those. but this may not fit with where you want to go

In terms of reading I would say that Cilliers, Juarrero, Axelrod & Cohen & Clark were probably amongst the most important - they are fully referenced in the attached (See attached file: 2003 08 IBM Systems Journal.pdf)

Dave Snowden
Director
Canolfan Cynefin Centre
IBM Global Services
From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Wednesday, 19 May 2004 11:01  
To: Dave Snowden  
Subject: Re: Bureaucratic narrative for meaning  

Thank you David for your valuable commentary and article.

Can I ask your opinion on something?

As stated before I have been reading yourself, Stacey and Boje which has led me to read Hegel, Elias, Mead and now Bakhtin. I am trying to understand how knowledge/meaning is created. It makes sense to me that it is created by the individual and the social at the same time - this being the paradox in that both the individual and the social are creating meaning at the same time (Stacey refers to silent conversations and vocal (social) conversations). Elias through his theory of symbols supports the Gesture/Response concept of meaning put forward by Mead. The implication is that what is required for creation of knowledge is a free flow of conversation which in many organisations is not possible due to blockages perpetrated by certain individuals which can lead to, amongst other things, repetition in the patterns of conversation (something I have noticed now that I am more aware of it) which does not allow the creation of new knowledge/meaning.

This sees knowledge creation as a process rather than a systemic view which sees knowledge creation as something that can be managed. Is it that the free flow of conversation takes place in the informal social networks, where trust is higher and there are less blockages and damaging power relations?

What do you think?

I am hungry to learn as much as I can, and the more I read the more questions I have. I am very interested in what you are doing in the way of revealing informal social networks (I assume you believe these are self-generating and emergent) through narrative analysis. Boje has done a lot of work on narrative analysis - what do you think of his work? I am very conscious of the requirement to complete research in this area and therefore your work in particular is of importance to me. Other authors on social networks take a more mechanistic, scientific approach – i.e. who do you talk to, where do you go to ask questions etc and then graph the results to reveal social networks. I do believe that the knowledge is created through conversation/language/symbols and therefore narrative analysis as a research method makes more sense to me. I would very much like to review any software you may be willing to let me see.

Stacey believes that free flowing conversation can be encouraged by understanding what group processes and individual plays prevent the free flow - these plays are mainly psychological in nature and require an understanding of them. The facilitator/manager can then assist the free flow of conversation, by being involved in it.
You have mentioned that you believe the informal networks can be disturbed/stimulated (pushing them to the edge of chaos?) and then see what happens and reflect. I would be very interested in learning how this (disturb/stimulate) happens.

I would like to thank you for replying to my e-mails I find it encouraging and uplifting to be able to communicate with people like yourself who are pre-eminent in their field.

Regards,

Alan.

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*I begin to inform others of my reading of philosophy – namely Mead, Bakhtin, Elias and Hegel. Increasingly I am attracted to their writings. I express again a desire to somehow apply Stacey’s thinking in the workplace.*

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From: Dave Snowden  
Sent: Wednesday, 19 May 2004 13:49  
To: Byrne, Alan  
Subject: Re: Bureaucratic narrative for meaning

Nice to hear from you. If you are getting into the philosophy then delanda’s re-interpretation of deluze "Intensice Science and Virtual Philosophy" is also outstanding. You might also be interested in Casebeer's "Natural Ethical Facts". Like (I think) you I see knowledge creation as a co-evolutionary but necessarily dialectical process through which meaning emerges (in the CAS sense of that word). From this perspective the focus on conversation in Stacy et al is therefore limited. If we look at the pattern entrainment aspects of human intelligence, then excess conversation can be a force to prevent knowledge creation. From this perspective certain types of blockage may be a stimulation to knowledge creation as pressure and starvation are key to innovation (along with perspective shift which is also more likely to be achieved through hitting barriers).

Informal communities tend to have higher trust and knowledge exchange capability, knowledge creation is more likely to happen when informal communities with some common membership (trust certification) collide around a task. This is the aim of our work on social network stimulation (SNS) - here we balance self-formation with management of the ecology. SNS directly manages boundary and attractor conditions to create a space in which Identities (or communities) form in such as way that their goals are more proximate to organisational goals. It would be easier to explain this, although I will be publishing shortly. We are also looking for experimental subjects if it is of interest? Its a great pity you can't make Sydney as it will feature strongly in the two day master class Want to set up a call?

Dave Snowden  
Director  
Canolfan Cynefin Centre  
IBM Global Services
From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Thursday, 20 May 2004 09:55
To: Dave Snowden
Subject: Re: Bureaucratic narrative for meaning

Thank you David, I would like to talk, I will e-mail you next week to arrange a suitable time. In the interim I am intrigued by the idea of an organisation being an experimental subject - what exactly would this entail?

Regards,

Alan.

From: Dave Snowden
Sent: Thursday, 20 May 2004 13:31
To: Byrne, Alan
Subject: Re: Bureaucratic narrative for meaning

An experiment means we train you and others in a technique and allow you to practice it, with our support We do this with developing ideas (by which I mean those where we are pretty sure they will work, but are not sure exactly how) on a fairly relaxed "cost only" basis before they move into the high margin licence fee and full consultancy charge out rates of something more mature.

Dave Snowden
Director
Canolfan Cynefin Centre
IBM Global Services

From: Dave Snowden
Sent: Thursday, 20 May 2004 17:24
To: Warwick Holder; Byrne, Alan
Subject: Fw: Bureaucratic narrative for meaning

Alan, Warwick this is to introduce you to each other

Alan - Warwick is an experienced Cynefin practitioner, based in Singapore but a resident of Perth. He is visiting relatives next week and I thought it might be useful for the two of you to meet

Dave Snowden
Director
Canolfan Cynefin Centre
IBM Global Services
I never did take up this very generous offer. It had not occurred to me to approach the executive of the company I worked for to suggest such a programme. I had recently been unsuccessful in applying for an internal position of strategic manager, and despite having an MBA specialising in strategic management, had not even merited an interview. I still had the emotional scars and was not of a mind to subject myself to further harm.

From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Monday, 24 May 2004 14:23  
To: Ralph Stacey  
Subject: Opinion

Hello Professor Stacey,  
I have now had the opportunity to read more of your material and that of Mead and Elias (note: my references to what You said below is my interpretation of what I think you meant).

I note that you highlight the attempts of people in organisations to spread knowledge - for example by increasing the number of opportunities to meet informally. Whilst acknowledging these attempts you state that knowledge creation is a process (complex responsive), and that knowledge is created through the free flow of conversation in the living present. You highlight barriers to the free flow of conversation and suggest that management should be aware of these barriers and reduce/remove them by changing conversations as a part of those conversations not from outside of them.

I recently read an article on Telenor's headquarters in Oslo which promotes informal communication in various ways (I can fax this article to you if you give me the number). It led me to surmise that what you specify as attempts to spread knowledge could be seen as opportunities for conversations to take place, which in turn can lead to the creation of knowledge, assuming there are present the conditions to allow for free flow of conversation.

I am currently trying to decide how I am going to research the area of knowledge creation. I am drawn to your hypotheses, but would not know where to start researching free flow of conversation. Therefore I submit that what could be examined is attempts to increase informal conversations which have promoted something more akin to free flow conversation (given helpful power relations and trust). I do not suggest that you can 'manage' (spits to one side) people’s conversations, which you have demonstrated are self-organising, but perhaps you can provide the opportunities where these conversations can take place.

What do you think?

Regards,

Alan.
Again the struggle in trying to find a way of researching Stacey is highlighted. I continue to try to locate a management solution providing access to a means of promoting free conversation, and therefore controlling human interaction within the organisation. I cannot let go of Stacey’s ideal, believing that to do so would somehow diminish or dilute his theory.

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From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Monday, 24 May 2004 14:39  
To: David Boje  
Subject: Re: Article request

Hi David,

Have not yet received the first paper you sent me, must be coming by boat.

Stacey believes that meaning/knowledge is created simultaneously by the individual (through silent conversation) and interaction with other people (vocal conversation). Mead refers to response and gestures with meaning being created by the response. The meaning lies in the gesture and the response taken together. To create meaning you therefore need interaction. To know the meaning you have to know the likely response, the more you interact the more you will learn what the responses are likely to be. This role play is played out as a silent conversation. So the interaction includes vocal and silent conversation at the same time from which meaning emerges.

Stacey refers to the complex responsive process - which views the creation of knowledge as a process, which is not a systemic view such as that taken by concepts such as the learning organisation. Viewed as a process (between individual and social - each being formed by the other) taking place in the living present, knowledge cannot then be objectified or captured. Seen from this perspective knowledge is created through the free flow of conversation. Therefore barriers to the free flow of conversation are barriers to knowledge creation. Such barriers include lack of trust (Prof. Karen Stephenson) and maintenance of power relations. By recognising these barriers and participating in their reduction or removal from the inside (not from a management perspective) knowledge can be created.

The conversations (vocal and silent) are self-organising and therefore allow the complexity metaphor to be applied.

Mead provides the framework for this perspective through his emphasis on language as a significant symbol which is used to create meaning forming both the individual and the social at the same time.

Knowledge is not the property of the individual, but is created by interaction and relationships with other people. It is the interaction itself which creates the knowledge and the way people interact is primarily through symbols the most obvious which is language.

I guess that compliments your emphasis on narrative

Don't know if this gives you any insight, but it presents my insights to date.

Alan.
Hi Alan

I am attaching the working paper I did on storytaker and Snowden. I am also giving you link to some Bakhtin work

http://scmoi.org/ODCtrack.htm There is a chart there of the chronotopes; I have a paper in second draft, that is in rewrite that goes into the chronotopes

I thank you for the Stacey and Mead summary. The difference I seen in Bakhtin, is that the interaction that creates meaning is not just about conversation, but the five stylistic strata developed in Dialogic Imagination. As I read it, the five styles are dialogic, and they evolve historically and stratify and re-stratify through counter forces of heteroglossia. A good example is the recent tiff by the Maryland Governor

http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,120541,00.html The Governor is commenting on his State controller being unable to be understood, since the McDonald's crew member only spoke Spanish. This is an example of the heteroglossia of English-only language consciousness washing over McDonald's corporation, who is now held up as an example of multi-culturalism being preached by so-called "leftist universities" degrading the great American tradition of assimilation. While this is an anti-narrative about a moment of conversation between a State controller and a McDonald's counter person, it is also saturated with dialogized interaction between alternative stylistics: political genre, corporate speech/script, nationalism, and so forth.

From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Thursday, 27 May 2004 15:26
To: David Boje
Subject: Re: Article request

Thank you David. I would also be interested in anything you might have to say about the discursive system theory of organisational change as pointed out in the 'Call for papers' document you sent me.

It will take me some time to digest this work as it is unfamiliar and I don't readily recognise the meaning of many of the concepts, but I enjoy the process of learning.

Le agredezco su ayuda

Muy attentamente le saluda

Alan.
I found David Boje’s writings difficult to comprehend and they did not readily resonate nor make sense to me. The Spanish is because David is located in New Mexico.

From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Friday, 28 May 2004 08:13  
To: Warwick Holder  
Subject: Cynefin

Hello Warwick,

I understand from David Snowden that you are a Cynefin practitioner. I am currently undertaking a PhD, examining the creation of knowledge from a postmodernist perspective. I am particularly interested in the how knowledge is created and have looked at conversation and narrative amongst people.

I am not sure exactly what a Cynefin practitioner does, or how you become one.

I am interested in learning as much as I can, particularly from a pragmatic perspective as to how the theory translates into practice.

Perhaps you could provide some insights as to what you do and how you do it? I appreciate you are probably very busy, and don't need to think about work whilst on vacation, but I would be grateful for any assistance you might be able to provide.

Regards,

Alan Byrne.

Will not give up on trying to apply Stacey’s theory, even if it means compromising.

From: Prof Ralph Stacey  
Sent: Sunday, 6 June 2004 18:04  
To: Byrne, Alan  
Subject: RE: Opinion

Hi Alan

I think the role of informal conversation is an interesting area of research. You might think of a narrative methodology as a way of pursuing this.

Regards

Ralph

This was in answer to my lengthy e-mail of 24 May 2004, supporting the use of narrative methodology.
Hi David,

Hope you are keeping well and that your conference in Sydney went to plan.

I noticed you presented a paper in the UK recently at KM UK 2004, I don't suppose there is any chance of getting a copy?

I have held off ringing you until I am a bit more solid on the questions I would like to ask.

I have read a lot of Stacey, as you know, and I have read what you think of Stacey (at least what you thought a couple of years ago). I have also read what David Boje thinks of your perspective. I am looking to come up with something that makes sense to me.

You believe that knowledge is both a thing and a flow (is this dualism - both/and?), whereas Stacey believes knowledge is a process (individual and social forming and being formed at the same time) - do you think flow and process are the same?

I believe that knowledge is created through social interaction - be that social constructionism or symbolic interactionism (which I favour due to importance of language) - but definitely in the interpretative paradigm. That's about as far as I want to delve into the psychology - I am not a psychologist nor do I have the time to explore in depth how that interaction works from a psychological basis.

Given that knowledge/meaning is created through social interaction mainly through the symbol of language - what I need to do is come up with a narrative methodology to study my own organisation. I believe this organisation is firmly in the functionalist modern mind set and is the antithesis of a postmodern perspective. What I need to do is to show this through narrative analysis, and show that knowledge/meaning is mainly created in the many informal self-generating social networks.

The idea would then be to show how these informal social networks can be identified through some narrative methodology and thereafter be stimulated (or disturbed using the complexity metaphor). I guess informal social networks use informal conversation?

My problem is that I don't know which narrative methodology to use or even how to go about it.

Further down the line I would like to look at what type of knowledge is created through this stimulation - I guess the problem is that most knowledge is now required for commercialisation (Lyotard refers to narrative knowledge - being more reflective). If you take the position that knowledge is created in these networks through the symbol of conversation, which is a relational process, then managers would have to be a part of it, rather than from the outside looking in.
Excuse the rambling, but at this point I have to come up with a research proposal - as the more pragmatic of anyone else I have read, I welcome any feedback you may be able to provide. I know from your previous e-mails that you have practical knowledge of narrative methodologies, have identified informal social networks and are just about to release work on stimulation of social networks.

Regards,

Alan Byrne.
Ok a more detailed response
The KMUK conference is next week and I'm talking rather than presenting a paper, although I will be writing a paper based on the talk and will send it to you when it is available.

My view of knowledge is that it is both a thing and a flow, and the relationship between the two is dialectical not dualistic. I like Ralph's work a lot but I do think that he goes to much to an extreme. "Complex Acts of Knowing" argues that Stacy and Nonaka are both correct, but in context. Nonaka represents systems thinking, which Stacy criticises with great elegance but again to extreme. Nonaka is OK for ordered systems, Stacy has a better but not complete understanding of complex ontologies and does not address chaotic ones.

So I agree with your statement that "knowledge/meaning is created through social interaction mainly through the symbol of language", but I would not agree if you were making a claim for universalism.

Now to your question, I think there are two things that would work for you, that we have developed over the last few years

- a narrative methodology, fully worked with supporting software.
- an approach to the mapping of informal and formal communities and their interdependencies.

I attach a brief summary document that is an overview of our method. The other thing you need to be aware of is that we operate an open source approach, in that we make material available and train/mentor but do not execute. So a partnership is possible if you are interested.

I know its an outside chance, but we are running a full training and certification programme in Cynefin techniques week of the 21st June in South Africa - the cost is fairly minimal, so even with the air fare it would stack up well in price against a conventional course ..........

Dave Snowden
Director
Canolfan Cynefin Centre
IBM Global Services

You may gather there was some real concern for me about how I was going to conduct the research. This was the stumbling block that could have prevented my completing my PhD. As the most pragmatic of the people I contacted I looked to David Snowden to...
come up with the answers for me, and he did. I was taken with the idea of identifying social networks. Interestingly he too likes Stacey, but finds him a bit extreme. As indicated previously I was drawn to the extremism.

From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Monday, 14 June 2004 08:24  
To: Dave Snowden  
Subject: Re: Getting there?

Thanks David,

The attached document does not seem to have made the electronic trip, can you please re-send.

I have read a few articles on dialectical processes. My understanding is that it is in the main a Marxist and Hegelian dialectical process. Hegelian is the one that makes most sense to me where you have a thesis, an antithesis and a synthesis, where the thesis and antithesis are both present at the same time, are indistinguishable and therefore a paradox. Could you explain for me how your view of knowledge being a flow and a thing is a dialectical process in this sense or not as the case may be?

FYI I have been asked to present a session on risk management at the State Insurance conference. I have given these before where I show how our organisation has all the right pieces of paper (propositional themes) with nice flow diagrams and standard following tables - situated very much in the functionalist paradigm. This year I wanted to present something more in line with the interpretative paradigm. I have been reflecting on the concept of risk. Do you think that the management of risk/return could be viewed as a dialectical process - in as much as both are present at the same time, and therein lies the paradox - the more return you want the greater the risk. What I am trying to get at is that the most important aspect of risk is how you see it and talk about it - not how you record it (which in my opinion is just to make people comfortable that they can control what is often uncontrollable). Risk management as practiced is viewed as being overly bureaucratic and therefore a form of anti-story builds up around it.

Regards,

Alan.

Again I relate my increasing exposure to philosophy and in particular dialectical processes. That I am changing in my thinking is evidenced by my desire, at a state insurance conference, to present my view that language is what is important; how we talk about risk between ourselves is what is critical. I have begun the linguistic turn.
Hello Prof. Stacey,

Hope you are keeping well. I have just finished reading part 3 of the fourth edition of Strategic Management and Organisational Dynamics. Coupled with the articles you sent me and your book on Complex Reactive Processes I think I am beginning to get the picture.

The legitimate and shadow themes together with the official and unofficial ideologies struck a cord in the context of conversations, and with creating meaning through protosymbols, significant symbols and reified symbols. I have also started to notice Rhetoric in the conversations in which I take part, in interaction with my work colleagues. All of which sits better with the gesture/response and forming the social while being formed by it (the paradox).

I have been asked to speak at the State Risk Management Conference on July 8. I have given talks before on this subject, which usually follow propositional themes - flow diagrams, tables, policies etc. This time I would prefer to tackle the subject differently. I have been reflecting on how we talk about risk management. The idea of risk/return seems to me to be a paradox - the more return you want the greater the risk. Both are present at the same time, therefore the risk conversation is a dialectical process. This is based on Hegelian Dialectics - with the thesis (Return) the antithesis (risk) and the synthesis (decision with elements of both). Am I on the right track or have I missed the point?

Risk management is very bureaucratic, with a myriad of forms and tables giving comfort to board members and auditors, but simply more work to the people who have to fill them in. The main benefit seems to be that the risks are discussed.

From early on I believed that people hid behind the idea of organisation/companies. Cigarette, chemical and alcohol company spokesmen time and time again justified their actions as being the 'company' as if this was somehow different to the actual people making decisions to, for example, give cigarettes out for free in third world countries. When I began to read what you have written (started reading your work in 1999) it struck a cord with me. I have been in management for over 24 years and I have no doubt that what is espoused as the official ideology has little to do with what actually happens. The word that comes to mind is hypocrisy. Senior management rarely want to give up any control and constantly use their positional power to kill conversation that is diverse or not in line with their thinking. The result is stability and a workforce that repeats conversational themes informally - but do not create any tension with the legitimate system.

One other area I wanted to clarify - I like to read books/articles such as those you have written, that help me to make sense of the world I live in. I think I am gaining knowledge - but it is with very little interaction from the people around me, who are tied
very firmly in the functional paradigm. How does this fit into the idea of gaining knowledge through social interaction?

I thank you for your time in responding to my e-mails. I would appreciate your comments re the risk management seminar, as I believe it is time I started to talk about what makes sense to me instead of following the line and addressing what the audience wants to hear. I want them to see a different way - to challenge their thinking. It may not be popular, but you have to start somewhere.

Regards,

Alan.

Unloading a bit of learning in this e-mail. I was becoming increasingly confident in my own focus and engaged in some political commentary on organisations as well. I was nervous about the risk management conference and I was seeking approval for what I was proposing. You will also notice that I have indicated that I have begun to notice narrative themes in conversation and, meetings at my workplace. This helped to crystallise much of what Stacey and others were writing about.
In response to my e-mail of 14th June:

From: Dave Snowden
Sent: Wednesday, 16 June 2004 15:56
To: Byrne, Alan
Subject: Re: Getting there?

Attachments: Supporting Research Methods.ppt; Supporting Research Methods.doc

I’m with the Hegelian interpretation and I think the "Flow" and "Thing" is a paradox (which by definition makes it difficult to explain). If I add complexity thinking to Hegel (something which is easy to do) then thesis and anti-thesis are actually symbiotically co-evolutionary. That is to say they appear distinct but are intimately linked and interacting.

Managing Flow is what I call context management - looking to generate networks without thought to content, Managing Things is content management, the traditional approach to KM. Narrative seems to be in both spaces simultaneously. My overall approach is to manage the three separately and make no conscious attempt to integrate them, so that the resulting synthesis is context specific. On risk, I think there are paradoxical elements

I placed the extract below on the ACT network a week or so ago and there have been some interesting responses

I have also attached the summary of our research methods - apologies for missing it

(See attached file: Supporting Research Methods.ppt)(See attached file: Supporting Research Methods.doc)

Dave Snowden
Director
Canolfan Cynefin Centre
IBM Global Services

*Once again David displays his willingness to share his thinking and resources, but increasingly I am moving towards the ideals set out by Stacey in his theory of Complex Responsive Processes of Relating.*
Hi Per,

I have been busy trying to get my head around the research topic. Finally I have decided on the area.

I want to look at knowledge creation (meaning) from the interpretative paradigm, mainly symbolic interactionism that occurs in the illegitimate (shadow) self-organising social networks in my organisation.

The hypothesis is that: it is within these social networks that knowledge is created via tension with the legitimate part of the organisation and the difference in ideologies - official and unofficial. The legitimate/illegitimate also affect power relations amongst people which are both constraining and enabling as shown through conversations. One of the main factors affecting conversations in the illegitimate social networks is trust, which also impacts on power relations.

My organisation is a very 'stable' organisation, very much run along functionalist lines, with a strong bureaucracy - this is shown with many propositional themes. However there are many illegitimate social networks which challenge the legitimate organisation and through the tension this creates can effect organisational change programmes.

There is significant difference in the conversations - narrative themes predominate in the social networks, propositional themes and rhetoric is far more common in the legitimate gatherings.

The research method will have to be ethno methodological where the researcher is both participant and observer. Conversational/narrative analysis will need to happen also assisting in the identification of the informal social networks.

Where I part from Stacey is that I believe that conversation can be assisted through the promotion of informal social networks, where knowledge creation takes place. You provided a good example in Nortel. Whether they can be stimulated or not seems to be managerialist but deserves investigation.

On another issue I have been asked to speak on risk management at the State Insurance Conference. I want to put forward a different perspective - that management of risk is a dialectical process - both risk and return are present at the same time, and you have to accept one with the other, managing the paradox. Or is it dualism - where we choose to strike a balance thereby eliminating contradictions - Aristotelian logic. The paradox issue is that you do not resolve the risk because it is part of the return - you live with it. Have you anything that might help? I know this will not be what the audience expect - but I want to challenge their thinking.

Alan.
Perhaps this e-mail represents a good summary of where I got up to at this point. I stayed with Stacey, but the necessity to research his concepts saw me draw upon conversation/narrative analysis and the promotion of informal social networks – both established research methods with readily available tools. I also continued to seek some support on the risk management presentation.

From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Monday, 21 June 2004 08:27  
To: Scott Gardner; Per Johansen  
Subject: Update

Hi Per (for Scott when he returns),

Did some reflecting on the weekend as to why I have been drawn to Stacey. What is it about his view of the world that has made sense to me. I started by looking in some depth at my own experiences in the workplace and matching that to some of Stacey’s commentaries (his experiences).

The answer came to me - I believe his approach is more ethical/moral. He is not a managerialist, nor am I. I believe that nearly all management theories put the manager above the rest of the workforce, other people are there to be manipulated in some form or fashion to do what management want - not a moral or ethical position.

So that is why I am also drawn to Jean F. Lyotard and his view of knowledge. He believes that knowledge use to be about truth, but is now about commercialisation - a means to an end. Seems this is tied up in ethics as well.

So armed with this insight, I now propose that what I am looking at is an ethical perspective on knowledge creation - which when you think about it would have to be informal, illegitimate, self-organising and socially interactive, because otherwise it would be subject to some form of managerialist manipulation.

From this perspective David Snowden would be seen as a managerialist because David looks to stimulate social networks towards achieving some type of management outcome (otherwise why would management pay him a consultancy fee).

So finally I feel like I have identified my area; what makes sense to me.

What do you think?

Alan.

So apart from being drawn to extremists, finally the realisation that it is Stacey’s ethical approach to which I am drawn. I resonate, can relate to and am persuaded by Stacey’s anti-managerialist stance and the reasons for it. And so began a slow withdrawal from anything managerialist. I now believed I had to analyse conversation to establish formal/informal themes and local conversational patterns. Conversation was outside the control of management – a beautiful thing. However I still had to figure out how to conduct the research. How do you analyse conversation?
Hello Professor Malcolm,

My name is Alan Byrne. I am currently undertaking a part-time PhD at Edith Cowan University. I am interested in an ethical approach to knowledge creation within the informal parts of organisations. Through the interpretative paradigm I have focused on symbolic interactionism and the complex responsive process put forward by Prof. Ralph Stacey.

Central to this way of looking at knowledge creation is ordinary conversation. The research will require conversation analysis to establish themes/patterns.

Are there any units I could do where I could acquire these research skills? and where I would be exposed to technological support for such research?

Any assistance would be appreciated.
Regards,
Alan Byrne.

Hi Prof. Stacey,

Further to my previous e-mail on 15 June, I have since found the answer to my question about getting knowledge from further reading. Fonseca, Streatfield cover the issue by saying that reading is a conversation with the author, whilst writing is a conversation with yourself. Would you add anything?

I have also been reflecting on why I continue to persevere with your work, whilst not being able to sit easy with the work of someone like David Snowden. The answer came to me out of the blue - ethics. I find your work is more ethical/moral. I do not like the managerialist approach where managers use whoever and whatever they can to achieve intended outcomes. Much research supports this perspective, but I believe your approach is more ethical/moral. What do you think? Does this underlie your work? Have you written any papers on the subject?

I have also taken to Jean François Lyotard and his perspective of narrative knowledge as truth utilised towards the betterment of society. Today knowledge has been commercialised and has little to do with truth. Again on the ethical/moral side.

Regards,
Alan Byrne.
Dear Alan,

Thanks for your e-mail. It's an interesting topic you are researching. It reminds me of a PhD I examined a few years ago, of which the details are as follows:

For a number of years I taught a unit on discourse analysis and semantics which looked at a range of different ways of analysing discourse, including conversation. This unit was called LST5282 Topics in Discourse and Semantics. I left my files on this unit behind when I retired last year so they should be accessible in a filing cabinet in the room I used to occupy on the Mount Lawley Campus (17.238). This room is now the office of the Centre for Applied Language and Literacy Research.

If would like to refer to these files and have any difficulty in accessing them, let me know. Maybe I could come in and get them and we could have a talk about what you are planning to do.

Best wishes,

Ian Malcolm.

Hi Alan

I was interested in your view about the ethics of my work. I have been thinking about this and you might be interested in the attached book chapter.

Regards

Ralph

Another motivational moment as Prof. Stacey expressed some interest in my thinking. This gave me more confidence that I was on the right track.
Hi Per/Scott,

Just got an e-mail from Prof. Ralph Stacey - he was interested in my perspective on his work as ethical/moral. Looks like I have hit on something here and it will inform the work.

I have also been in touch with Prof. Ian Malcolm retired from ECU’s Dept of Linguistics. He has offered me his teaching materials if they can be located - his materials include the analysis of conversation.

I am also waiting for two papers that are to be delivered by David Snowden and Dr. Peter Critten in UK conferences - they have promised me copies.

So the scene is set - an ethical approach to knowledge creation - that happens to be postmodernist. I am going to try and use a narrative technique in the writing as I am the participant in the research, which will be reflective. I now feel a missing ingredient has been located, that fits with my making sense of my own experiences.

Regards,

Alan.

Although I might sound confident that I have discovered how to research this topic, I actually continued to be extremely nervous about how it was all going to play out. I was not convinced that conversation analysis was the way to go. Of note in this e-mail are the words ‘postmodern’ and ‘reflective’. This pointed to an increasing preoccupation with philosophy and research that existed on the boundaries of acceptable methodologies.

Hi Alan

Great to hear that you are making some progress with a backing of the heavyweights in the field. See if you can firm up on your last document and come and see us with a proposal to go-week commencing July 26.

cheers

Scott
Re: Update
From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Monday, 12 July 2004 10:07
To: Scott Gardner
Cc: Per Johansen
Subject: Re: Update

Attachments: RiskcoverInsuranceConference_08_07_2004V3.ppt

Thanks Scott,

I have come up with a title and an abstract which I will forward soon.

I also gave a presentation at the Government Insurance Conference at the Hyatt - where I put across the importance of conversation and how you talk about risk. This is attached (PowerPoint - their choice not mine).

I was interested in the feedback I received which typically (and predictably) turned to "yes, but how can we make use of that?" - we being management. However they did listen and were interested.

I have contacted Prof Ian Malcolm, who has agreed to assist with the conversation analysis, giving me access to his course notes. However they are in ECU storage and I am awaiting contact from Janice Bryant to see if they have them (don't suppose you know her?).

We have to fill out a progress report which was sent to me by ECU. Apparently if we don't I cannot proceed to round 2. They have extended the deadline because they knew you were on leave.

The 'at present' title is Postmodernist Knowledge Creation: An ethical perspective.

Regards,

Alan.

_That insurance conference was interesting. I was on a panel of four speakers. We each gave a twenty minute presentation and then answered questions from the floor. The other three presentations relied on risk management policies and procedures, whereas I concentrated on how we talk about risk management. The only questions I was asked were from the other panel members. However I felt it necessary to explore how it felt to present my ideas to an audience, to examine my own commitment. I was pleased that people listened and I gained experience of how such topics might be better presented in the future._
Dear Prof. Malcolm,

I have contacted Janice Bryant who has been trying to track down your course notes.

What I want to do is to identify themes/patterns in conversation and changes in those themes/patterns. The Complex Responsive Process is based on process thinking as distinct from mainstream process thinking. The theory is put forward by Stacey with support from Fonseca, Shaw, Streatfield and Griffith. Their work is informed by Mead, Hegel, Bakhtin and Vygotsky.

In essence the perspective I am taking is that thinking of knowledge creation as a process does not give primacy to the individual, rather the process is the interaction between people through vocal symbols in the form of communication. Meaning emerges in these conversations - I believe that more meaning/knowledge is created in informal social networks due to there being more trust and more conducive power relations and anxieties. The creation of knowledge is reflected in the changing themes/patterns of those conversations.

My issue is that I am unsure of how to research this. Yes I can record conversations but I am unsure as to how to analyse these recordings to establish themes/patterns.

Would you have any ideas?

Kind regards,

Alan Byrne.

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Hi Scott, Per

Further to previous advice that I have to fill in a progress report this Friday 22, please find attached a summary of what I have been doing. You will notice I have accumulated 60 books/articles - much time has been spent reading/re-reading sections of this literature, predominantly Stacey and his supporters (Fonseca, Shaw, Griffith, Streatfield).

See you on Friday approx 11.15.

Alan.
From: Ian Malcolm  
Sent: Friday, 23 July 2004 19:16  
To: Byrne, Alan  
Subject: Re: Conversation Analysis  

Dear Alan,  

Thank you for this further explanation. It sounds as if what you are setting out to do is both original and valuable. The creative and heuristic potential of talk was the focus of some productive work carried out by Barnes and others in educational contexts in the U.K. in the 70s. Their work was, however, in my view, not very theoretically sophisticated or systematic. The Complex Response Process Theory and the scholars who have been using it are not familiar to me, but if you would like to bounce some ideas off me and to examine some texts with a view to looking at potential analyses, I would be glad to meet with you some time at Mount Lawley Campus. I could also look for those lecture notes, though I can't think of anything in them that quite fits your needs. Friday afternoons are usually a good time for me. Let me know if you would like to set up a meeting.  

Best wishes,  
Ian.

From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Thursday, 29 July 2004 10:40  
To: Ian Malcolm  
Subject: Re: Conversation Analysis  

Dear Prof. Malcolm,  

Thank you for your kind offer, it is one which I will take up. I will contact you when I have made some further progress. At this point in time I am beginning to get a sense of conversational styles and themes, but still have not quite got to terms with conversational patterns.  

My supervisor is Dr. Scott Gardner and Dr. Per Johansen is co-supervisor. The research will be within my organisation. I have been here for some time and therefore can provide reflection and insight into themes/patterns. Under the complex responsive process perspective it is important that the researcher is also participant - not necessarily 'outside' of the conversational process. The areas encompassed in this study include philosophy and psychology - though my training is in neither of these areas. My main interest is in an ethical approach which for me means non-managerialist. However no-one can be an expert in all areas and this
will not prevent me from gleaming insights from these areas to gain an understanding of how knowledge is created through human interaction.

I will send you some of what I have written shortly, prior to setting up a meeting with you.

Regards,
Alan Byrne.

At this stage I was playing for time, as I remained unconvinced that conversational analysis was the best way forward, I was also concerned about the time and resources required to gain skills in this area. I was not a conversational analyst and did not feel the commitment necessary to quickly become one; another sign I was not on the right track.

From: Alan Byrne
Sent: Thursday, July 29, 2004 5:19 AM
To: Ralph Stacey
Subject: Progress

Hello Professor Stacey,

I hope you are in good spirits.

I have continued to investigate knowledge creation from the Complex Responsive Process perspective. As indicated to you previously I find this a more ethical approach in that it promotes the idea of human freedom and for me is non-managerialist.

I acknowledge that conversation, as a self-organising process, is how people create meaning and identity. However from my own conversations I believe it is unlikely there will be a quantum leap in thinking which will abandon current approaches to knowledge management. Therefore I believe some form of compromise is necessary to at least work towards the ideal. So for example encouraging informal conversations and getting people to focus on the quality of those conversations and recognise how they can be blocked etc. In other words using mainstream thinking to introduce a seed, that can grow and begin to change those same mainstream thoughts. A good analogy might be the Trojan horse.

All very well. But I still have a research problem. How do I show that knowledge is being created, or NOT created in everyday conversation? How do I identify themes and patterns from such conversations? I do have access to a Professor of Linguistics but I thought you might have already broached this issue with your colleagues.

I have no formal training in philosophy or psychology but I will continue to pursue what makes sense to me.

Regards,
Alan.
From: Prof Ralph Stacey  
Sent: Friday, 30 July 2004 23:07  
To: Byrne, Alan  
Subject: RE: Progress  

Attachments: Chapter 2 Methodology.DOC

Hi Alan  
I think you might find it helpful to think about a narrative methodology. I attach a paper I am working on.  

Regards  
Ralph

Professor Stacey provided me with a chapter of his, at the time, yet unpublished book which covered research methodologies for the theory of Complex Responsive Processes of Relating. This was a pivotal publication and one that was to bring a heavy influence to bear on my chosen research method. Finally I had a research methodology related directly to the work of Professor Stacey. Suddenly all previous analysis of research types fell into the darkness. I read the work with a hunger, devouring each sentence as if I depended on them for life.

From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Monday, 11 October 2004 12:29  
To: s.gardner; p.johansen  
Subject: Still here

Hello Scott and Per,

Just to update you, I have been busy putting together the information for the research proposal. It is taking shape and I have commenced the research.

I will drop off a typed copy of the draft (which is very much a draft) soon.

The basic concept is that little research is conducted on how we actually do things in our organisations – how we make sense of the workplace. Primarily this takes place in our interaction, vocal communication being one of the main symbols.

The theoretical base is the Theory of Complex Responsive Processes of Relating which is derived from the work of George Mead and Norbert Elias.

The research is self-reflective – a narrative on how things actually get done in the organisation. The idea is to look for themes/patterns trying to explain/understand the organisation and the people within it, as individual and collective identities. This form of research is currently used in the University of Hertfordshire in the UK under Professor Ralph Stacey. What makes it unique is that it is my narrative, therefore it is important that I participate in the organisation. Tools used include a digital tape recorder, which allow for reflection on what was said and how it was said and in what conversation style.
From what I have read, there is only a handful of people pursuing this area, all based in the UK. I believe that if more people focused on the present, how things actually take place, the reason they take place, that the insight gained would inform corporate strategies and the behaviours of management, getting them to re-focus their attention in certain areas (such as the quality of conversation)

Anyway, I just want to tidy up the draft a bit more, before bringing it into you.

The title will change again, but what I want to do is look at meaning creation within this organisation from the Complex Responsive Process of Relating theory. I expect to find that little new meaning/knowledge is created and rather the same old themes/patterns repeat themselves in a dance of stability. The implication is that many corporate programmes designed to change behaviours will fail as management continue to ignore the response to their gesture – the response being self-organised and incapable of management control. Focusing on the response would give an insight into what sense staff are making of management’s gestures.

Alan.

So with ever increasing confidence and authority I begin to hang everything together. Of particular note in this e-mail is the observation on self-reflective narrative that ‘What makes it unique is that it is my narrative’. Here for the first time is the concept of my own authorial voice emerging, though at the time I did not realise it. It also pointed to a potential problem with the Ethics Committee within the university, or at least this was the opinion of my supervisors. Would the pragmatic approach of my supervisors weaken my resolve to pursue the only research method that had made any sense to me?

From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Monday, 1 November 2004 08:36
To: r.d.stacey
Subject: Research Proposal

Hello Prof. Stacey,

I handed in my first draft of my research proposal. The title is ‘Refocusing Management Attention on how things get done anyway: A complex Responsive Process of Relating perspective on the creation of meaning in organisations’.

I wish to add to the body of knowledge, advanced by yourself and your work colleagues, because I believe in what you are saying, it makes sense to me.

However I have a problem.

My supervisor believes we are going to have problems getting the research component past the Ethics Committee. The research put forward is reflexive narrative. The suggestion is that we adopt what has succeeded with a recent thesis at the University – reflective practitioner. However this seems to be more observant than self-reflective.

Can you advise, if possible, how you got the research your Doctoral students are doing past your Ethics Committee? If you need a more formal approach from my supervisors
let me know. However as the foremost authority on this subject your input would be invaluable.

The issue is that the University has not approved this type of research before and look for more mainstream research approaches – at least at the level where the research gets approved.

Nobody here is that familiar with your work that they can offer expert guidance, however I am willing to give it a go and we will muddle our way through. But first I must get it passed by the Ethics Committee.

Kind Regards,

Alan Byrne.

From: Prof Ralph Stacey
Sent: Monday, 1 November 2004 21:23
To: Byrne, Alan
Subject: RE: Research Proposal

Hi Alan

This is a problem we also face with our Ethics Committee. Usually the researcher is required to get the permission of anyone involved in the research. This is possible when one is talking about interviews but not when one is writing about one’s own experience of one’s own work. You can’t enter every meeting and say “BY the way, I might write about this”. What we do, therefore, is make anonymous the persons and intuitions one is writing about. This is not entirely satisfactory because of course people who know the researcher know what organization he is talking about. Anyway the Ethics Committee accepts this. My argument is that I am writing about my own experience, which I am entitled to do without asking others for their permission – it is after all my experience. You could mention that my University accepts the reflexive, personal narrative approach.

Regards

Ralph

This was a very important reply, as it established legitimacy and validity for my chosen research methodology. I was steeled for the battle. This was the way forward I began to see the light at the end of the tunnel.
Hi Alan

Per and I have discussed your proposal and recent analysis and we are pretty impressed by the quality of your thinking. In order to progress things we need to meet around mid-January to finalise your proposal for presentation to two carefully selected reviewers. Subject to decent reviews we can then put together a defensible case for ethics clearance. I have outlined some relevant points in the meeting summary from Dec 10 below-

* It was agreed that the genesis of your thinking through exploration of Capra, Mead, Kant, Darwin(say three Hail Mary's), Shaw and Stacey had led to a firm ontological basis for the study. The issue was establishing the defensibility of Stacey's methodology for your work based on precedents and your own credentials as a practitioner and researcher. I suggested that we used Stacey methodology chapter and the Uni of Hereford ethics committee acceptance of his research group's work as a precedent. I think we should also consult Mark Williams who supervised Edward Wong's thesis and got this and similar proposals through the ethics committee. I have a copy of Mark's book- How to write a doctoral thesis about work fyi.

* Richard has agreed to offer some advice on your thesis and has suggested you have a look at Stan Deetz on different approaches to organisational science. I have a copy which is in the mail to you.

* Pattern recognition and the emergence of the narrative was identified as a key element of understanding how things really get done in organisations. Per would like to discuss this with you with reference to the original work of Habermas on conversations and space.

Please call Per tomorrow 9-273-8328 for some feedback. We can then set up a meeting on Jan 17 or another convenient date.

regards

Scott

Feeling pretty good after this e-mail. It seemed that the research methodology had been validated by the work of Stacey, however note the introduction of having to make the research defensible to the ethics committee. Of note also in this e-mail is the first mention of Dr. Mark Williams, whom I had not met at this point.
Hello Professor Stacey,

Hope you had a good Christmas and all the best for the New Year.

I am currently getting my PhD proposal ready for the ethics committee. To remind you the current title is ‘Refocusing Management Attention on how things get done anyway: A Complex Responsive Process of Relating perspective on the creation of meaning in organisations’. I want to add to the existing body of knowledge as I believe in what you are saying, it makes sense to me. Since exploring the theory in more detail I have obtained a level of ‘Socratic ignorance’ – not knowing but wanting to know more.

I have begun to try and identify the shadow and legitimate themes organising the experience of my interaction with others at work. I have also started to recognise the existence of power relations – where I feel enabled and constrained depending with whom I am interacting. I have also noted the rhetoric being used to prevent a free flow of conversation.

Following discussion with my supervisors I now have an issue. Personal reflexive narrative as a research method involves a major departure from ‘acceptable’ research. My supervisors advise I need to include some form of structured research in order to get my proposal approved.

I am a rebel by nature and an idealist by choice. I want to stay true to the theory and see any attempt to have an inside/outside approach to the research as diluting the theory.

One idea occurred to me over the weekend. What if I use conventional research to highlight how conventional research defines the organisation? That is to say that I do a case study with value statements, vision statements, internal document analysis and interviews with management, giving their view of the world. This would be the legitimate view of the organisation – what it is safe to talk about. Then I move to my own reflexive narrative where I look at how things actually get done, and what the themes emerging are, and how this either supports or undermines the previously researched official picture of the organisation.

I must admit I remain uneasy completing research just to provide a so called ‘air of legitimacy’. But unless I can provide a very strong argument not to, I am in a bind.

One other issue you might be able to comment on, my supervisors are enthusiastic about using NUDIST to enable pattern recognition in narrative – have you used this and is it applicable to emerging patterns? Also I note that you have group sessions with your PhD candidates, so enabling an iterative process in their reflexive narratives. Have you any suggestions of how I might similarly proceed, given I am the only member of my group?
I would greatly appreciate your input, as the world authority on the theory of Complex Responsive Process of Relating.

Regards,

Alan

Here I point to a move away from knowledge creation to meaning creation. They can be used interchangeably but I now view meaning creation as being closer to ontology than epistemology. Note also I have a greater comfort in disclosing my thinking to Stacey. This followed more readings and reflection and some discussion with my supervisors.

Already I have begun to be infected by the need to make my research acceptable. I began to look for ways of disguising what I was really about in order to get past the ethics committee. It would take me some time to recognise that this positioned me in an unethical stance. So called legitimate, mainstream research (such as a case study) would be the Trojan horse carrying my so called illegitimate reflexive methodology through the gates of academic acceptance.

From: Prof Ralph Stacey
Sent: Wednesday, 12 January 2005 23:25
To: Byrne, Alan
Subject: RE: PhD Proposal

Dear Alan

I sympathize with your predicament. Perhaps you could write about values and visions etc but focusing on how they are actually used. I have never used NUDIST. About groups – all I can suggest is that you approach others doing a PhD at your university and suggest forming a group.

Regards

Ralph

Although it did not register at the time, Professor Stacey’s suggestion to form a PhD group at ECU was to turn out prophetic.
Hi Alan

Some useful comments fyi from Mark Williams.

regards

Scott

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Subject: Draft PhD proposal
Date: Mon, 17 Jan 2005 20:14:44 +0800
Thread-Topic: Draft PhD proposal
From: "Mark WILLIAMS"
To: "Scott GARDNER"

Thank you Scott, for the draft of Alan Byrne’s proposal.

This is exciting work. I approach the field from action-reflective practitioner research. Self-study is an important area and can include elements of heuristic inquiry which allows for personal, imaginative, and artistic dimensions. Narrative research fits in nicely as does life history research incorporating biographical and autobiographical narrative research traditions. Much work has been done in the field of Education. I particularly recommends the Denzin and Lincoln handbook of qualitative research.

I liked especially Alan's work in the Research Method section. However, I do think that he will need to beef up this section considerably by including references to authoritative qualitative research standards (Guba and Lincoln, etc). Being based only on one theory and a few authors, it is too superficial and focused on a narrow reading of the literature.

In general I would say that it is an exciting and fruitful direction and thrust. Alan could certainly do this and produce a great thesis. However, he does need to read and think more widely and make the subject matter his own. It might be wise to be less pedantic when using classical and massive philosophers like Kant and Hegel.

I attach an early proposal template which he may find helpful.

Mark

First contact with Dr. Mark Williams. Immediately I am drawn to his positive language and acceptance of what I had done in my proposal so far. Making the subject matter my own was to be a key in my development, but at the time I did not take much notice of the comment, as I was celebrating his enthusiasm for the research method, which had given me such angst over a long period.
Thanks for this Scott, please pass on my appreciation to Mark.

I will need to digest his comments.

The template for the thesis looks interesting.

I have been working on inclusion of more mainstream research into the study.

The official ideologies of the organisation, the legitimate themes, is how senior management have designed the organisation (rational teleology) to achieve the desired objective. The organisation itself is seen as a system which will, with proper management, achieve the desired goals (formative teleology). I can, using the organisation as a case study, research these propositional themes by examining the tools used by senior management and how they view how the organisation actually works – supporting mainstream theories on how we understand organisations.

I can then relate my actual experience with how we actually get things done, primarily through local interaction with my colleagues, with shadow themes organising much of our experience of being together. It will deliver an alternative way of understanding the organisation and the people that are the organisation, with a focus on interactions.

Regards,

Alan.

This e-mail ushered in a change away from knowledge creation to teleology – what causes things to happen in organisations. This change was due to the increasingly difficult proposition of researching knowledge creation. If it was a process, in conversation how could you identify when it was happening? It was too problematical to pursue and I changed the emphasis from knowledge creation to organisational strategy i.e. what makes the organisation what it is. This was supported by several of Stacey’s books on the subject matter. It necessitated a wholesale change in focus in the research proposal, but ultimately I believed made the subject matter easier to research.
From: Scott Gardner  
Sent: Thursday, 20 January 2005 12:11  
To: Byrne, Alan  
Subject: RE: Draft PhD proposal  

Cheers Alan  

Sounds like you are refining your approach to make it more workable. Will fix a time with you Per early Feb to help you fastrack towards a proposal presentation.  

regards  

Scott  

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E-mail is copy from Scott Gardner’s system. Not date or time stamped due to being Apple software. From Alan Byrne, to Per and Scott:  

Hi Per and Scott,  

I have placed two copies of my Research Proposal in Per's postal box. This is a significant update, based on feedback from Scott and Mark Williams.  

Let me know when we can catch up to discuss?  

Alan  

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Re: Research Proposal  
From: Scott Gardner  
Sent: Tuesday, 15 February 2005 12:46  
To: Byrne, Alan  
Cc: p.johansen  
Subject: Re: Research Proposal  

Hi Allan  

Will do and organise a meeting next week.  

regards  

Scott
From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Friday, 4 March 2005 16:45  
To: 'm.williams; 'Scott Gardner'; p.johansen  
Subject: Meeting 4-3-2005  

Gentlemen,

I thoroughly enjoyed our conversation today. I found it stimulating and motivating and I thank each of you for your input.

Every time I meet with you guys I come away realising that I have only touched the surface with so much more to learn and understand. As Richard McKenna would put it my ignorance levels keep rising.

I look forward to progressing my learning with your help.

Regards,

Alan.

Following our discussion the research proposal needed to be beefed up in certain areas. At least I felt I was on the right track.

Re: Update  
From: Scott Gardner  
Sent: Friday, 4 March 2005 15:32  
To: Byrne, Alan  
Cc: p.johansen  
Subject: Re: Update  

Attachments: Alan Research Questions.doc

Hi Alan and Per

Good to talk to day. I think we are making some substantial progress. Have attached Mark's table as promised. Drinks soon?

regards

Scott
Hi Alan
I have been looking at the net for Habermas. Try Ideal Speech situation and open space discourse, Habermas.
You should find something you can use.
Per

Hi Scott,

Can you let me know about that meeting Mark was talking about – I have no details and the one that Per was talking about as well.

You mentioned Thursday – so can you let me know ASAP
Thanks,
Alan.

The meeting referred to here is a Doctoral Colloquium facilitated by Dr. Mark Williams. Scott introduced this to me. This Doctoral Colloquium was to become pivotal to my research.

Hi Alan

The meeting was Marks Participant Action research consulting group at 2.45 then drink and think group at 3.45. Per's idea is separate and he teaches in the afternoons. Both groups tend to focus on the underlying philosophies and approaches to reflective practice.

I am doing an informal talk on the nature of Professional Knowledge at the second event but will also attend the first although i have no idea of the format.

If you are interested it will see you 2.30 my office.

regards
Scott
I attended the Doctoral Colloquium on Thursday and a new world was opened up to me, that being philosophy. I had tinkered around the edges as indicated in previous e-mails but here was a fully fledged philosophical think tank where I was expected to contribute. It was academic nirvana and was to shape my thinking opening up new spaces. I was introduced to many philosophers including Don Cupitt, a particular favourite of Dr. Mark Williams.

E-mail is copy from Scott Gardner’s system. Not date or time stamped due to being Apple software. From Alan Byrne, to Scott:

Scott

I have had a read of the first half of Emptiness and Brightness by Don Cupitt and it has opened another door to my thinking.

As a result I tried out some new searches on the Internet and guess what?

George Herbert Mead - the basis for Stacey's thinking - is a pragmatist - now following up with Richard Rorty - a neopragmatist. Language is a key to all their thinking - as Cupitt says we can't see anything unless we can put it into words. I will explore in more depth - and add to proposal - by the way Rorty includes work on Habermas - seems like I can strengthen the philosophical aspect of the study.

Alan

And so the voyage begins in earnest. I begin to understand in much greater depth what Stacey is writing about. I am particularly attracted to Richard Rorty and neo-pragmatic thinking. I am beginning to sense my philosophical self and I begin exploring what type of philosopher I am.

Re: UpdateFrom: Scott Gardner
Sent: Wednesday, 9 March 2005 18:43
To: Byrne, Alan
Cc: m.williams
Subject: Re: Update

Hi Alan

Looks like a visit on Thursday might be a good idea. Mark's references seem to have helped a lot.

regards

Scott
From: Mark WILLIAMS
Sent: Thursday, 10 March 2005 11:56
To: Scott Gardner; Byrne, Alan ; Per JOHANSEN
Subject: RE: Update

The three Musketeers

Can you make it to my room 17.166 at 4.00pm today for a chat or a small presentation to our Professional Action Research Group?

Beer or wine is on me!

Regards, Mark

From: "Scott Gardner"
To: "Byrne, Alan "
Cc: p.johansen

Hi Alan

Hope you got something useful out of yesterdays session.

I have taken on board the comments and responded to Mark the group in the attached email.

Per is organising a discussion session at his place in Leederville today at 4.30. David Palmer another Stacey aficionado (excuse my Spanish) will be there- so if you can make it give Per a ring on 9-381-2994.

cheers

Scott

From Alan Byrne, to Per and Scott:

Thanks Scott/Per

I was out of the office on Friday, in Joondalup Library.

I would like to have attended the meeting with Per, and hope that I can in the future (a bit of notice would be helpful)

I did get a lot out of the meeting on Thursday and following Mark's invitation will continue to do so when I can.

It is now obvious to me that we create our meaning/individual /collective identity through conversation/language. This has a basis in philosophy, and thinkers such as Habermas and Stacey put forward ideal conversation that enables such creation.

Language as the basis for reality is taken up by American Philosophers such as the neo-pragmatist Richard Rorty. That interaction is essential comes through loud and clear
within areas such as intersubjectivity (Kolb). All of this can add weight to the Research Proposal.

Regards,
Alan.

From: Scott Gardner
Sent: Monday, 14 March 2005 19:05
To: Byrne, Alan
Cc: p.johansen
Subject: RE: Per's place today?

Hi Alan

Sorry about Friday- it was a pretty poor effort on my part

Sounds like you are making some significant progress with the thinking behind the thinking, and the defensibility of your method. It would be useful for you to concentrate on building this in conversation with Per and Mark when I am away with a view to submitting your proposal for review in May.

regards
Scott

I have made many adjustments and alterations to the research proposal, but with this new found philosophical knowledge a whole new perspective is being explored and must be included. Despite the additional work, I am pleased to undertake it as I am enjoying the learning.

From: Mark WILLIAMS
Sent: Friday, 1 April 2005 10:56
To: Mark WILLIAMS
Subject: World Professional Action Research
Dear friends and colleagues in professional action research world-wide

I draw your attention to the Berlin-based Forum for Qualitative Research in the email copied below. Katja Mruck does a great job in this on-line journal which had many common features with our professional action research.

Although I will not be visiting Berlin this July, we are working on 3 research grant applications for funds for colleagues from the Institute of Electronic Business to visit us here in Perth. We are especially concentrating on intelligent building systems with a professional action research angle. I hope to be visiting Berlin again in 2006.

My book "Write a Doctoral Thesis about Work" is being rewritten and translated into Chinese with an important new co-author, Associate Professor Dr Shankar Sankaran. Shankar has had a distinguished career in Singapore before joining the College of Action Research at the University of Southern Cross in Queensland and New South Wales. I will be delivering 3 papers at 2 conferences in China in July this year.
Our Professional Action Research Group (see the attached photo of the executive enjoying life) is working through the rich consequences of leaving behind old Platonic thinking to embrace the neopragnatic anti-realist existentialist perspectives propounded by Don Cupitt in his latest books "Emptiness and Brightness" and "Life, Life". In this spirit I offer you my poem below: (Note that Og Mandino is an American inspirationalist speaker of the more evangelistic variety).

Og Mandino says
"Treasure love
    Above all else
When your gold
    And health are gone
    Love will remain".

But I and Cupitt say
"Construct happiness,
    Bright with words,
Gold and health
    And love may go
    But life will remain".

Warm regards, Mark

Mark is a breath of fresh air, and just what I needed to continue on with my research proposal. I began to concentrate less on what was expected of me, and instead focused on what I believed and felt. The relief in doing so was palpable. I was granted an academic freedom by the language of Mark.

From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Friday, 22 April 2005 09:45
To: 'Mark WILLIAMS'
Subject: Further to dialogue 21/4

Hi Mark,

Trust you are keeping that ankle elevated.

Would you please be good enough to let me know what the 7 personality factors you related yesterday are titled so I can research?

Really enjoying our dialogue, I thank you for your continued support.
A quote from George Bernard Shaw:
The reasonable man adapts himself to the world, the unreasonable man persists in trying to adapt the world to himself, therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man.

Regards,
Alan.
From: Mark WILLIAMS  
Sent: Friday, 22 April 2005 14:45  
To: Byrne, Alan  
Subject: RE: Further to dialogue 21/4  
Great quote suggesting a great critique of our discussions!  
For the enneagram try http://hem.passagen.se/karin.e.berglund/karin/ennea.html  

Warm regards, Mark

From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Wednesday, 18 May 2005 15:08  
To: 'Scott Gardner'; 'p.johansen'; 'm.williams'  
Subject: Progress report as at 18/5/2005  

Gentlemen the following is an update report:  

I have been attending a meeting with Mark and colleagues each Thursday. This has been extremely beneficial to my thinking, particularly from a philosophical perspective.

As a result I have expanded my readings to now include: Socrates, Bakhtin, Foucault, Vygotsky, Habermas, Wittgenstein, Marx. Rorty, Gadamer, Gergan and Fairclough. My focus has firmly fixed on Dialogue and I believe I can create a dialogic continuum (using many of the aforementioned philosophers) which can explain how identity changes/remains the same in organisations. Dialogue involves, in my view, role playing and role playing seems to me to be a key in creating realities.

My research methodology is now firmly fixed in heuristic inquiry and reflexivity. I am in particular going to use heuristic insights to inform the reader of progress in my own thinking. My organisation has a particular official ideology (a context) reflected in documentation and the role played by senior mgt, reflected in their language and tonality. These roles are played by those in the organisation that wish to progress – it involves the creation of a role which includes language and voice (tonality). If the dialogue between participants is low on the continuum which I will develop, meaning it is a magistral dialogue with power relations firmly enabling the official ideology, it is unlikely the organisational identity will change significantly if at all.

If you subvert the official ideology in any way you are likely to remain at your level. I wish to explore this aspect with staff who have not progressed, and those that have, as well as reflecting on these issues myself.

I am currently adding to my initial research proposal, which continues to favour Stacey, but significantly departs from him in proposing that ordinary conversation is not necessarily transformative, what is needed is for people to have particular types of dialogue and importantly to play the necessary role. Environmental conditions are either conducive or restrictive to dialogue.

This is merely a snapshot of where I am heading, with some omissions.
Alan
As you can see from this e-mail my language has started to change, I believe it is more confident and more comfortable. For the first time I also hint at the concept of marginalisation (‘If you subvert the official ideology in any way you are likely to remain at your level’). My research methodology has now firmly embraced heuristic inquiry and reflexivity, both interpretative and both contentious as ‘legitimate’ research methods. Both however made perfect sense to me. I was introduced to heuristic inquiry by Mark. You will also notice that I have commenced a break from Stacey’s ideal, allowing myself to offer alternative views. For me this was a sign of academic maturity; a realisation that I can make a contribution to society.

Re: Progress report as at 18/5/2005
From: Scott Gardner
Sent: Wednesday, 18 May 2005 18:57
To: Byrne, Alan
Cc: p.johansen
Subject: Re: Progress report as at 18/5/2005

Hi Alan and Per

Alan - looks like some serious thinking since our last meeting.

The quality of your arguments and coherence of your ideas have undoubtedly improved. Philosophically you are well up to PhD standard but we need to package all this into an acceptable proposal/ethics clearance application soon. How about making this the main focus of our next meeting Thursday 26 pm or Mon 30 pm?

regards

Scott

From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Monday, 23 May 2005 08:51
To: 'm.williams'
Subject: Food for thought

G’day Mark,

Riding into work this morning and pondering our discussion of reality on Thursday, I had the following language running through my head:

If reality is constructed by our thoughts, individually and collectively, and our thoughts are language running through our heads, then reality is language running through our head.

If reality is language running through our head, then our reality is limited to our vocabulary and the context within which we use it. That language describes our reality, at a given time. If the language changes then the reality changes – our description of reality changes.
So if, for argument, there is a material reality, then we are limited to experiencing that part of it we can describe. If through various genres of dialogue we can redescribe our reality, we can create a new one. Perhaps this is what people do when they play various roles. If this is the case then there are many, many realities only limited by our ability to describe them.

Alan

This e-mail is a turning point. It marks the beginning of the emergence of my authorial voice. I am no longer concerned with practical issues, instead I am exploring my own thoughts. These e-mails are further explored at the Doctoral Colloquiums which I now attend every Thursday. My colleagues listen and question what they hear, and I respond. We each have a fair go. The intellectual currency gained at this meeting appreciates over time.

From: Mark WILLIAMS
Sent: Monday, 23 May 2005 10:21
To: Byrne, Alan
Subject: RE: Food for thought

Wow!

-----If reality is constructed by our thoughts, individually and collectively, and our thoughts are language running through our heads, then reality is language running through our head.

Yes. but it is OUR reality built around our sensations of Be-ing.

-----If reality is language running through our head, then our reality is limited to our vocabulary and the context within which we use it. That language describes our reality, at a given time. If the language changes then the reality changes – our description of reality changes.

Yes, but if our reality changes too far from what our culture's language dictates we are hallucinating etc

-----So if, for argument, there is a material reality, then we are limited to experiencing that part of it we can describe. If through various genres of dialogue we can redescribe our reality, we can create a new one. Perhaps this is what people do when they play various roles. If this is the case then there are many, many realities only limited by our ability to describe them.

I think that the end of your line of thoughts arrives at a stunning ending. The corollary is that by being aware of certain words more than others the language running through our heads changes thus changing our reality.

I think that positive thinking doesn't really work as it is merely a smear of positive language over the mass of so-so language we have accumulated from various sources over our lives. More and more I am attracted to a deep application of cognitive therapy or rational-emotive therapy combined with Yoga type exercises and meditation that
concentrates of awareness of language running through our heads. The meditation should focus mindful awareness on the language but with no judgement. We can surf the language and thus steer in the ways that give us a better ride.

Can I send this out to the rest of the group Alan?

Warm regards, Mark

Loved the fact that Mark wanted to send this to the rest of the group. Originally when I joined the Doctoral Colloquium I was nervous and unsure of my contributions. However with the encouragement provided by Mark and the other members of the group I quickly gained enough confidence to express my own thoughts and to make a contribution.

From: Mark WILLIAMS
Sent: Monday, 25 April 2005 11:31
To: Scott GARDNER; dmaguire; iaj27; athol.b; lavertu; P.Taylor; Edward_Andre; sek188; jackie; mjhhiiya; pwang; Byrne, Alan
Subject: FW: Philosophical Foundations

Dear Professional Action Research group

Thought you might be interested in Michael's thoughts carrying on our conversation on Thursday regarding Hegelian dialectical thinking.

Remember we used the following example:

THESIS: A glass half full.
ANTITHESIS: A glass half empty.
SYNTHESIS: A glass half full of air and half full of water that can be constructed as either half empty or half full.

OUR METASYNTHESIS: Through communication I/we construct ourselves and others constructing, through communication within themselves and others, a glass containing half air and half water which can further be constructed as half full or half empty depending on whether or not the path to happiness is used as the underlying ethic.

Regards, Mark
From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Thursday, 28 April 2005 09:26  
To: 'Mark WILLIAMS'  
Subject: RE: Thursday meeting ( Tomorrow afternoon)  
Attachments: Thursday meeting ( Tomorrow afternoon)  

My apologies Mark, I am unable to attend today.

However some thoughts on the Hegelian Dialectic:

Firstly I believe the idea of a glass being half-full or half-empty is used in everyday language as a metaphor for being optimistic (half-full) or pessimistic (half-empty).

As such logically the glass simply contains water.

The discussion therefore is whether you view the glass of water as a pessimist or optimist - which it could be argued depends on the role you are playing and within what context.

My understanding is that the Hegelian Dialectic is used as a process towards what Hegel himself admitted was an unreachable absolute truth. Towards this truth consider the possibility that the glass is neither half-full nor half-empty - it simply contains water. People construct their own reality on whether it is half-full or half-empty depending on what role they are playing and in what context.

Alan.

From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Monday, 30 May 2005 10:56  
To: 'm.williams  
Subject: Update  

Hi Mark,  

Hope everything went well for Athol (not sure of the spelling) today – I would like to have been there.

Thought you might be interested that I was listening to a Robbie Williams song on Saturday – and I heard the lyric – ‘Thoughts running through my head’. As thoughts are words this equates to language running through my head – is this an example of the idioms you were referring to?

Further to your comments about the use of the word journey – I changed the word to voyage, and within a half hour had written my first poem, titled ‘Voyage of Discovery’. I will share this with the group on Thursday.

Regards,  
Alan.
This poem is included elsewhere in this thesis but marked the beginning of a lyrical style of writing that I enjoy. This is best expressed in the change in the thesis title from my journey to my voyage of discovery. I am beginning to appreciate the role of the artist in many different forms, and am gaining an understanding of their marginalisation from the mainstream.

| From: Scott Gardner  
| Sent: Monday, 30 May 2005 19:37  
| To: Byrne, Alan  
| Subject: More forms |

Hi folks

This is general broadcast. The Graduate School have now decided to send progress report forms to the supervisors with an ultimatum to get things filled in by June 13 or no re-enrolment for semester 2 unless a $100 late fee is paid.

With this in view could you please arrange to come in prior to June 13 to fill out the details. Alternatively Jock or others, I can fax it out with my section completed for your comments plus signature.

apologies for the inconvenience

Scott

| From: Byrne, Alan  
| Sent: Tuesday, 31 May 2005 08:31  
| To: 'm.williams'  
| Subject: Supervisor |

Hi Mark,

I am sending an update to Scott in line with recent changes to ECU re-enrolment requirements.

I was going to suggest in that update that I would like you included as a third supervisor.

Would you agree to be a third supervisor, together with Scott and Per?

I am assuming that this is possible.

Regards,

Alan.
From: Mark WILLIAMS  
Sent: Tuesday, 31 May 2005 12:19  
To: Byrne, Alan  
Subject: RE: Supervisor

Thank you Alan.  
I think that three supervisors would work well for your thesis.  

Regards, Mark

From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Tuesday, 31 May 2005 15:06  
To: 'Scott Gardner'  
Cc: 'p.johansen'; 'm.williams'  
Subject: RE: More forms  
Attachments: More forms

Thanks for the heads up Scott.  
I believe I have made significant progress this semester, particularly in my management philosophy thinking.  

The title of my thesis now reads 'What causes organisations to be what they are and to become what they will be: A postmodern pragmatic reflexive/heuristic inquiry'  

I have been reading in no particular order: Rorty, Wittgenstein, Bakhtin, Habermas, Foucault, Fairclough, Lyotard, Cupitt and others. This has resulted in the development of a dialogical continuum with magistral dialogue at one end and democratic dialogue at the other, punctuated along the way by the ideas of these great thinkers (including of course Stacey) as applied to language and the linguistic construction of reality.

The research is now most definitely reflexive and Heuristic and I believe defensible.  
I have finished my reading, and I am now writing. I will require a few more weeks to give you something presentable and ready to critique.  
I also believe that given the progress I have made in my own thinking as a result of my Thursday evening meetings with Mark and others, I would like to invite Mark to be a third supervisor. With yourself, Per and Mark I believe I will have the ideal mix to see me through to the end of this process.

If you have enough here to fill in the forms, fax it to me and I will sign. Otherwise I will be at Churchlands campus on Friday this week and I can call in at a designated time.

Regards,  
Alan.
I feel at this stage that I am more in control of my Phd. I have drifted for a while listening and taking advice from others, but now I know what it is I want to do and my expectation is that the research will emerge as I progress in my thinking.

From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Wednesday, 8 June 2005 09:19  
To: 'M. Williams'  
Subject: WELCOME

Hi Mark,

Welcome on board my voyage of discovery shipmate.

To celebrate I will provide afternoon tea tomorrow.

I also would like you to listen to this piece of music which I have adopted as representing my voyage. Perhaps we can play it to our colleagues on Thursday to see what images it presents for them.

The site to listen (you cannot download) is:
http://www.gmn.com/classical/work.asp?id=1790&cmp=Khachaturian%2C+Aram

Regards,
Alan.

So having got Mark on board as a third supervisor, I now being to explore music and in particular its relationship to heuristic inquiry. I listen with new ears that seem to hear much more than the old ones.

From: Mark WILLIAMS  
Sent: Wednesday, 8 June 2005 18:23  
To: Mark WILLIAMS  
Subject: Emergence through professional action research  
Attachments: Je regret nothing my TRANSLATION.doc

Colleagues (including our overseas colleagues in Berlin, Bath, San Francisco, and China)

One of the major benefits of professional action research is that it allows us researchers to find our own voice. This is a beginning, I think, to surfing the wave of language.

After reading Alan's email, I'm sure that we all celebrate his emergence and consolidation of his authorial signature and heuristic voice in his doctoral professional action research. I delighted in the music and discovered heuristic insights. SEE E_MAIL 8-JUNE 2005 9:19
In the following message, we share in Ed's re-discovery of the transformative power of his over-arching poststructural metaphor of Edith Piaf's sonf "Je ne regrette rien" See attached for Ed's powerhouse translation.

David MacGuire is just about completed his DBA thesis and is likewise in a transformative mode. In the following quote we glimpse his poststructural metaphor emerging. Using Don Cupitt's reworking of Heidegger's phenomenological existentialism, we join with David as he reveals brightness through language from unknowable Be-ing.

He was discovering happiness in the present. When he sat reading in the library or playing Mozart in the music room, he often felt the invasion of a deep spiritual emotion as if Shangri-La were indeed a living essence, distilled from the magic of ages and miraculously preserved against time…- Lost Horizon

I likewise am discovering a new and transformative voice in beginning my new book "100 Days to Neopragmatic Happiness"

Language runs in my head, in your heads, and in our heads in communication of all forms including body language, signs, tones of voice, and, probably most importantly, in the playing out of our cultural roles. (You can see that I veer towards Nietzschian active nihilism and away from Schopenhauerian passive nihilism.) Following neopragmatic thought, I take it that we can construct brightness through language responding to itself and to the sensations caused by signals from the haps that happen within unknowable Be-ing.

I hope that we can all, in our own way, claim maximal freedom and happiness for ourselves and grant such to others. I suggest you begin to construct happiness-freedom presents, past and futures through appropriate language.

Warm regards, Mark

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From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Thursday, 23 June 2005 13:10  
To: s.gardner; p.johansen; s.williams  
Subject: Research Proposal

Gentlemen,

Today, Thursday 23 June, I delivered to your mail boxes, building 17, a printed copy of my research proposal.

I look forward to your review.

Kind regards,

And for Mark: Zook Ni Yi Lu Soon Foong (‘I wish you conducive winds on your voyage’ – very old Chinese saying when boat was the main and sometimes only mode of transport)
Finally I deliver my research proposal. Mark is off for three weeks to China. So I can sit back for a couple of weeks awaiting some feedback.

From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Thursday, 30 June 2005 09:35  
To: s.gardner; p.johansen; m.williams  
Subject: Quote from 4 corners

Gentlemen,

As a validation of the type of research I am proposing, I offer the following quote from the most recent 4 corners programme screened Monday 27 June and titled ‘The Degree Factories’:

Professor Allan Luke, University of Singapore when summing up on ‘dumming down’ of Australian Universities to generate revenue earning potential: ‘Universities will lose their soul. They’ll lose some of their very powerful historical functions as social critics, as forms of alternative knowledge, as sources of aesthetic and intellectual activity and wealth – the kind of thing that, as corporations come and go, they’ll never be able to recover’.

So ECU stand up and be counted!

If you want to read the whole transcript the address is:  
http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/content/2005/s1401933.htm

Regards,

Alan

I could not resist some political commentary related to my research choice.

From: Mark WILLIAMS  
Sent: Monday, 11 July 2005 19:20  
To: Alan Byrne and others  
Subject: New emergence through professional action research

Attachments: LWsignature050509.gif

Dear Research Colleagues (including our overseas colleagues in Berlin, Bath, San Francisco, and China)

I am just back from China - home to 23% of the World's population! We had a great time presenting papers, finalising translation for our new book on professional action research, actually conducting professional action research on companies, delivering a public talk on professional action research to students from one of the top 10 MBA programmes, etc.
As I said in my previous email: "One of the major benefits of professional action research is that it allows us researchers to find our own voice. This is a beginning, I think, to surfing the wave of language."

The good news is that Athol has emerged from his PhD presentation with a powerful and convincing voice in which to write his thesis. And with leading edge ideas on how to deepen and strengthen his inquiry.

As you can see from Alan's email (Thursday, 30 June 2005 09:35), he has emerged a political voice. He has become what the leading Frankfurt School critical social philosopher Habermas would call "radicalized". Habermas himself testifies to being radicalized during his research associateship with Adorno. Adorno was the only German critical theorist to really enact his research themes to such an extent that his authorial voice is barbative and jarring.

David MacGuire has been submitted. We join with David as he reveals brightness through language within the haps that happen in life. "He was discovering happiness in the present. When he sat reading in the library or playing Mozart in the music room, he often felt the invasion of a deep spiritual emotion as if Shangri-La were indeed a living essence, distilled from the magic of ages and miraculously preserved against time…- Lost Horizon"

Warm regards, Mark

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From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Tue 12/07/2005 10:58 AM  
To: Mark WILLIAMS  
Subject: Return the conquering hero

Hi Mark,

Sounds like you had a great time in China.

I have been on a bit of a break since submitting my proposal for review - but I have had a fundamental breakthrough in how I want to present my finished thesis and conceptual model.

Per and Scott are meeting with me on Friday morning, 15 July at 10am - are you going to be available? Your input would be greatly appreciated either way.

Let me know if we are meeting on Thursday.

Regards,

Alan.
From: Mark WILLIAMS  
Sent: Tuesday, 12 July 2005 18:44  
To: Byrne, Alan  
Subject: RE: Return the conquering hero  

Thank you Alan - yes to both questions. I have made notes on the hardcopy - you can get in Thursday.

Warm regards, Mark

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From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Friday, 22 July 2005 08:00  
To: 'Mark WILLIAMS'; Scott GARDNER;  
Subject: RE: Thursday Doctoral colloquium  
Dear Colleagues,

Following on from our Thursday colloquium I offer the following observation on philosophy at ECU.

Drowning in a pool inhabited by business conventionalists, I only occasionally came up for air. It was not until I commenced an MBA at ECU that I finally surfaced and swam towards enlightenment.

Richard McKenna introduced the thinking of Prof. Ralph Stacey to the MBA. It was through Per Johansen that I was exposed to this management philosopher. I can remember the moment I was emotionally engaged, it was when Per announced that 'Strategy is bullshit'. From that moment on I followed a path that led to readings in chaos theory, quantum physics and complexity science. Where else would I have encountered such radical teachings?

However it was not until I was introduced to philosophy, by Mark, that I finally emerged from that pool of business conventionality. Philosophy opened my eyes to the presuppositions of management theory that until then had lurked unseen in unquestionable space. Every structure requires a foundation. The viability of the structure depends on the strength of the foundation. If you never seek to understand the weakness or strength of the foundation, how can you possibly know how viable the structure is? Philosophy arms you with the insight to understand the foundation. A deeper understanding of 'be-ing' provides a greater appreciation of all that follows.

My belief is that ECU should have a philosophy unit in the MBA as a core unit. Universities were once breeding grounds for social critics. The power of negation should not be underestimated. Hegel understood that the progression towards understanding was a new synthesis, resulting from a thesis and its negation, the antithesis. Critical thinking is essential in management, if we, as a society, are to progress. Too often the overwhelming demand to be positive is complicit in maintaining the status quo.
ECU has the opportunity to be different; to uniquely position themselves as being unconventional, and the lecturers cocooned in conventionality can undergo a metamorphosis, allowing their true selves to shine brightly.

I believe that ECU should debate the issue of whether Philosophy should be included as a core unit in the MBA in a public forum. As a student member of the GSBA I can help organise such a debate for higher degree students. What would be required are speakers in favour and against. This could be a mix of academics and administrators. If we don't start talking about these issues between ourselves they will remain language running through our heads and have no historical significance. Each of us can, through the language we use, effect the world we live in, both taking and leaving something as we pass through time.

I leave you the following passage from Steinbeck and Ricketts book, The Sea of Cortez (1941, p. 3)

'Let's see what we see, record what we find, and not only fool ourselves with conventional scientific strictures - in that lonely and uninhabited Gulf our boat and ourselves would change it the moment we entered. By going there, we would bring a new factor to the Gulf. Let us consider that factor and not be betrayed by this myth of permanent objective reality. If it exists at all it is only available in pickled tatters or in distorted flashes. "Let us go," we said, "into the Sea of Cortez, realising that we become forever a part of it; that our rubber boots slogging through a flat of eelgrass, that the rocks we turn over in a tide pool, make us truly and permanently a factor in the ecology of the region. We shall take something away from it, but we shall leave something too".

Regards,
Alan.

This is my own political voice emerging, embellished by a lyrical writing style. I have always had strong opinions and was now finding a way to express them that resonated with people and made sense to them.

RE: Thursday Doctoral colloquium
From: athol
Sent: Friday, 22 July 2005 09:11
To: Byrne, Alan
Cc: Mark Williams
Subject: Re: Thursday Doctoral colloquium

Alan
To help you in your quest, it may be useful to refer to the 'philosophy' courses in the DBA programs at Curtin and Murdoch. I have done both and found both useful. The Curtin Philosophy of Business Management in particular. As I have stated, informally, if I were a dictator, I would make this Course compulsory for all staff and students. You may like to look at the undergraduate courses as well as the TEE courses re philosophy to broaden your case.

Best wishes
Athol
Dear Colleagues,

This is excellent stuff, and introducing philosophy and ethics to business courses at ECU opens enormous possibilities for enlightenment. The sooner philosophy is embraced by ECU in its business courses the closer we get to brightness and emancipation, and hopefully further away from practices that pursue the path of business fraud etc.

Cheers

Edward Andre

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From: Philip DOBSON
Sent: Saturday, 23 July 2005 11:15
To: Byrne, Alan and others
Cc: Mark WILLIAMS; Paul JACKSON; Scott GARDNER
Subject: RE: Thursday Doctoral colloquium

Hi all - this discussion has struck a cord with me. For me philosophy is fundamental and along with Mark and Paul I would like to see a greater emphasis on this area.

- Why bother with philosophy?

Collier asks the question "why philosophy" and answers it thus:

> A good part of the answer to the question "why philosophy?" is that the alternative to philosophy is not no philosophy, but bad philosophy. The "unphilosophical" person has an unconscious philosophy, which they apply in their practice - whether of science or politics or daily life. (Collier, 1994: 17)

As Gramsci argues "...everyone is a philosopher, though in his own way and unconsciously, since even in the slightest manifestation of any intellectual activity whatever, in 'language' there is contained a specific conception of the world" (Gramsci, 1971: 323, cited in Collier, 1994: 17).

The "bothering" with philosophy can also provide the potential for emancipation from domination by one's social or academic grouping:

> ...is it better to take part in a conception of the world mechanically imposed by the external environment, i.e., by one of the many social groups in which everyone is automatically involved from the moment of his entry into the conscious world... Or, on the other hand, is it better to work out consciously and critically one's own conception of the world and thus, in connection with the labour's of one's own brain, choose one's sphere of activity, take an active part in the creation of the history of the world, be one's own guide, refusing to accept passively and supinely from outside the moulding of one's personality (Gramsci, 1971: 323-324 cited in Collier, 1994: 17)

The confidence provided by understanding different philosophical positions provides the researcher and the practitioner with the power to argue for different research
approaches and allows one confidently to choose one's own sphere of activity. The emancipatory potential of such knowledge is a powerful argument for "bothering with philosophy".

- see http://informationr.net/ir/7-2/paper124.html for a paper I wrote entitled "Critical realism and information systems research: why bother with philosophy?"

I think philosophy is vital to properly critique any position and provides a useful grounding for research ("underlabourer") which avoids wandering pathways that may lead nowhere.

Phil Dobson

Phew, never got such a response from our group. It points to the power of language and the expression of emotion that resonates with people, that they can relate to and be persuaded by. This feedback was very encouraging and warming.

From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Wednesday, 27 July 2005 16:02
To: 's.gardner'; 'p.johansen'; 'm.williams'
Subject: Redrafted proposal

Gentlemen,

Your re-drafts are in your internal mail boxes (with the exception of Scott, who as usual was the only lecturer in ECU actually working).

All changes have been made. For Per a neo-pragmatic perspective: Truth is what is good for us to believe.

I believe the proposal feels and looks better than before. Your feedback was gratefully accepted and diligently applied.

Kind regards,

Alan.

This re-draft followed discussion on 15 July 2005 with all three supervisors. It was I believed the final draft prior to the actual research presentation.
2.2 WHAT CAUSES AN ORGANISATION TO BE WHAT IT IS AND TO BECOME WHAT IT WILL BE: A POSTMODERN PRAGMATIC HEURISTIC REFLEXIVE EXPEDITION

2.2.1 PROLOGUE

This study is my personal voyage in seeking to understand what causes an organization to be and to become. Although indoctrinated from an early age with the fundamentals of Cartesian thinking and scientific management, I have sought to break free from the shekels (shackles) of such understanding and let my management-philosophy-self out of the closet.

Modernity holds few truths for me, but remains a common discourse for many who seek to uncover a given truth. Positioning myself as a postmodernist I am drawn towards a neo-pragmatic perspective from a base of anti-realism. My preferred assumption is that human beings interact to construct their individual and collective realities through language. Each person plays different roles according to the context of such interaction, engages in forms of dialogue commensurate with the played role and therefore constructs individual and collective identities continually.

From the concept of an organisation as being me and the people I interact with; through reflexive narrative punctuated by heuristic insights, I will seek to progress towards an understanding of what causes an organisation to be what it is, and to become what it will be. In the tradition of Hegelian philosophy this study may not tell us anything new, but potentially will provide a deeper understanding of the work experience between people within an organisational context. Perhaps through my understanding you will gain insights into your reality, and through my language you will be lead into spaces you have not been before.

“We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of our exploring
Shall be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time”

(From Little Gidding T. S. Eliot)
2.2.2 OVERVIEW

This overview is provided as a navigational map to guide you safely through this proposal. If your thoughts should wander off use this map to get your bearings and bring you back on course.

The research question posed is “what causes an organisation to be what it is and to become what it will be” (which is also in the title). Throughout the study this remains the focus. There are research sub-questions which continue to emerge as my own thinking and interaction with others develops. These sub-questions may be reductionist, but are provided for clarity.

- “Is the organisation a designed system which when acted upon causes organisations to be what they are and to become what they will be?”;
- “Is it a formative, rationalist or transformative teleology that causes organisations to be what they are and to become what they will be?”,
- “Is it an individual who causes the organisation to be what it is and to become what it will be?”;
- “How do power relations cause an organisation to be what it is and to become what it will be?”;
- “How does the type of dialogue practiced in the organisation cause the organisation to be what it is and to become what it will be?”;
- “How does the type of subversion within the organisation cause the organisation to be what it is and to become what it will be?”; and
- “How do the roles we play, the language we use and the theatre we create cause an organisation be what it is and to become what it will be?”

The research methodology is a heuristic reflexive inquiry. I reflect on my own work experience and on that of some of the people I work with and through that reflection, deepened by philosophical thought and conversation with colleagues, I gain insights which I share with you the reader. My focus is on understanding what causes organisations to be and to become. The reflective style is autoethnographic and throughout this thesis I wish to develop my writing style so that you can more easily relate to my insights and experiences. The outlined research methodologies are robust, and their value in qualitative research is documented in quality texts (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Moustakas, 1990; Stacey & Griffin, 2005; Williams, 2004).

The following figure provides you with a diagrammatic representation of where my expedition has taken me so far. The numbers 1-5 represent my voyage as narrated in the proposal.
Figure 3: First Generation Navigation Map. Originally I had planned to introduce each chapter with a mind map, as this is one of my preferred tools for displaying information. However my subsequent need to express myself in text, dampened this desire and only this mind map of my research proposal remains.
2.2.3 INTRODUCTION

If you were to conduct a Derridian deconstruction of this proposal undoubtedly you will find contradictions, not only in thought but in writing style. Such contradictions deliberately remain within the proposal, like buoys in the ocean, to guide you through my changing language. The necessity to commence this expedition is because in my reality we have not yet escaped the master/slave relationship in organisations. Perhaps through dialogue there lies a channel through which we can safely pass and be set free.

I set out on this expedition three years ago. My thoughts have self-organised to the point where I now feel comfortable with what it is I want to understand. I have posed the question what causes an organisation to be and to become, which really is a question of being as an organisation is merely people interacting together through language. The shadow title could easily read “what causes us to be the way we are and to become what we will be” (in an organisational context).

This study will be populated and punctuated by my heuristic insights as they occur to me, illuminating my thought development. These insights coupled with my reflexive thoughts will be indicated to you by being in bounded italics. How I have arrived at this research proposal will be covered in greater depth in the thesis.

This is a postmodernist study which draws heavily on anti-realism. The thought that reality is created through language will be developed to put forward an ethical argument where each person within an organisation bears responsibility for the individual and collective identities of all people within that construct. Management cannot stand outside of this happening and design/influence talk between people.

In reading the work of several highly regarded philosophers (M. Bakhtin, 1984; M. M. Bakhtin, 1986; Bernard-Donals, 1998; Brand, 1990; Burkitt, 1998; Kogler, 1999; Morrow, 1998; Rorty, 1980, 1989, 1991, 1998; Shotter & Billig, 1998; Stacey, 2003c; Vygotsky, 1987; Warnke, 1987; Wittgenstein, 1953) I currently believe there is a dialogical continuum ranging from a magistral dialogue to a democratic dialogue. This continuum is contextual (being influenced by power relations and the official ideology). Where people in their conversations collectively lie on the continuum, affects their individual and collective identities, and in turn critically the role they play. Everything is reflected in the language we use (for me language includes body language, voice, tonality, image, demeanour). To change identity people must change the dialogue they use and therefore the context and the role they play.

My initial thinking on this concept will be developed as my understanding deepens. The purpose in such exploration in not to seek out the truth of what causes an organisation to be and to become, as to do so would be taking a realist position where there exists an objective reality and this would be my attempt to represent it. Rather it is a pragmatic perspective which posits that the truth is what works.

There have been several ‘eureka’ moments that have punctuated my learning to date. There follows examples of these moments which I will term heuristic insights:
“Conversation self-organises and is a transformative cause of changes in individual and collective identities”

“Cooperative interaction is another way of stating relationship”

“I am drawn to Stacey because I realise he is an anti-managerialist”

“I am drawn to Stacey because his theory of complex responsive processes of relating ethically reflects my own ethics”

“I cannot fully implement the theory of complex responsive processes of relating as I would like – but wanting to is because I am blindly following Stacey's ideals”

“I am an idealist who strives for the perfection in theories”

“Language constructs reality”

“I am a pragmatist who can use bits of theories to put together something that makes sense to me”

“I am an anti-realist and believe that all reality is constructed”

“People play roles in organisations. These roles depend on the organisation’s official ideology and power relations. Context forms and is formed by these roles, these roles are formed by and form our experiences”

The insights above have been gained over a period of time and are not in chronological order. They happen as I interact with, the authors whose books I read, the people I work with and the people I study with. Each insight excites me as it opens yet another door through which I can develop my thinking and potentially deepen my understanding. However the more doors you open the more you question whether or not you have passed through the right one for you.

To gain an understanding of organisations I need to understand the presuppositions upon which mainstream management theory is based. The question of reality is, to me, fundamental to any discussion concerning people.

I will use the metaphor of being on a voyage of discovery, an expedition by seafaring vessel, to enable my capacity as a poetic lyricist to come to the fore. I have always delighted in the descriptive qualities of the language I speak and it is challenging for me to develop these in writing. That I am opening myself to this challenge will be detected by you in this research proposal as you sense the differences in writing style, occasioned by my development as I go further out to sea.
2.2.4 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.2.4.1 ANCHORS AWEIGH – DRIFTING OUT WITH THE TIDE

I was only able to hoist the sails of my management philosophy self after having raised the anchor and drifting some distance on the movement of the tide. The anchor so lifted enabled an appreciation that the mainstream management theory I was exposed to continually, could be questioned. The major questions posed are outlined below. It was Stacey that gave me the impetus to commence this voyage. The tidal movement in my thought was predisposed to the thinking of Stacey, and at that time I thought this movement would assist me in completing my voyage. However it only took me out of port. What follows is what I believed was my final destination. I have left it intact. These thoughts form the foundation of my thinking and provided the platform for what was to follow.

What was to follow was a realisation that I was being an idealist and was not open to the greater self-discoveries that lay ahead.

2.2.4.1.1 QUESTIONING A SYSTEMS VIEW OF ORGANISATIONS

2.2.4.1.1.1 THE SYSTEM VIEW

In Western culture the dominant way of thinking about the relationship between cause and effect has been primarily linear and unidirectional (Stacey, 2003c). Organisations must have a particular type of culture, management style or control system to be successful. Stacey puts forward the theory of strategic choice which

“…holds that the strategy of an organisation is the general direction in which it changes over time. The general direction encompasses the range of activities it will undertake, the broad markets it will serve, how its resource base and competences will change and how it will secure competitive advantage. This general direction is chosen by the most powerful individual in the organisation or by a small group of managers at the top of the management hierarchy” (Stacey, 2003c p. 32).

Thinking in such a way privileges the individual, where for example organisational strategy is chosen by the CEO, following a rational process, and the success of the organisation is due to the strong leadership of that CEO. Cognitivist psychology is implied in this way of thinking.

Having chosen the strategy, senior management must then design the organisational structure to implement it. That such a view is dominant is confirmed by Johnson and Scholes who refer to the strategic design lens. This “…views strategy development as the deliberate positioning of the organisation through a rational, analytic, structured and directive process” (Johnson & Scholes, 2002 p. 41) The staff are presumed to interact within a particular type of system, a cybernetic one (Stacey, 2003c). Having to motivate staff to achieve organisational goals implies a psychological theory of motivation usually based on humanistic psychology. The organisation becomes what it is, and does what it does because of the intentions and directions of senior management.
The focus is on systems and procedures in the belief that this is how things get done (Stacey, Griffin, & Shaw, 2002). What causes the organisation to become what it becomes is seen as the systems managers design and human action therein. This way of thinking views organisations as systems, designed and controlled by managers who can stand outside of those systems.

According to Stacey, Griffin and Shaw (2002) the very people (managers) that are designing such systems are also humans who interact with others in the system they design. They must therefore step outside the system and make choices for the future of the system. At this moment management exercises human freedom, whilst no-one else does. This is fleeting because they too become subject to the system they have designed. From a systems thinking perspective the freedom to choose is confined to special people who rely on the loss of freedom of the other human members. This alerts us to an ethical perspective in how most organisations are managed.

This is a key point that binded me to the thinking of Stacey.
2.2.4.1.2 THE PROCESS VIEW

Stacey and his colleagues put forward the theory of Complex Responsive Processes as an alternative to this type of systems thinking (Fonseca, 2002; D. Griffin, 2002; Shaw, 2002; Stacey, 2001, 2003c; Stacey et al., 2002; Streatfield, 2001). This theory is informed by the work of Mead (1972) and Elias (1991). The basic difference with systems thinking is that

“what an organisation becomes would be thought of as emerging from the relationship of its members rather than being determined simply by the global choices of some individuals” (Stacey et al., 2002 p.8).

Here there is no system for management to act on, no ‘it’. Instead there is a process of interaction or relating between people which no-one can step outside of and control because human interaction is not an objectified ‘it’. Human interaction is seen primarily as taking place through conversation. This type of process thinking does not view people as parts producing a system, but rather as people in relationships forming relationships whilst being formed by those relationships at the same time.

The complex responsive process of relating view of how organisations become what they are switches the focus to the ordinary, everyday interaction of people through vocal conversation. Mead (1972) states that vocal conversation is a significant symbol. He talks about the gesture of one person and the response of another in the creation of meaning. The gesture has no meaning until the response has been made, which in turn is a gesture awaiting a response. Significant symbols are those where the person making the gesture can experience what the response is likely to be. Vocal conversation is a significant symbol. Stacey, Griffin and Shaw (2002) take up the concept that meaning is created in the living present. Here they posit a macro-temporal structure from past to present to future and a micro-temporal structure of the present, which has micro-past, micro-present and micro-future. The gesture takes its meaning from the response (micro-future). The response only has meaning in relation to the gesture (micro-past) and the response made can potentially change the gesture (micro-past). In this context the future changes the past and the past changes the future. Meaning lies in the circular process of the present.

Meaning emerges between people in their everyday conversations in local situations at that time, the living present.

“Organising is human experience as the living present, that is, the continual interaction between humans who are all forming intentions, choosing and acting in relation to each other as they go about their daily work together” (Stacey et al., 2002 p. 187).

Instead of understanding the organisation as a reified ‘it’, organising is experience as the living present. There is no objectified ‘it’ and nothing to stand outside of and manipulate.

“When people communicate with each other…to accomplish the joint action of living and acting together, they are…continuously relating to each other in a responsive manner” (Stacey et al., 2002 p. 188).

From the perspective of complex responsive processes of relating, human interaction is a process.
Through the process of relating, individual and collective identities are continuously being formed and transformed, thereby making the ‘organisation’ what it is and what it will be.

“Sense is made of organisational life by attending to the ordinary, everyday communicative interacting between people at their own local level of interaction in the living present” (Streatfield, 2001 p. 81).

It is in such interactions in the living present, that the future of the ‘organisation’ is being perpetually constructed as the continuity and transformation of its identity. Management cannot step outside of interactions and operate or arrange them; they can only participate in them. It is through their interaction that people become who they are both individually and collectively.

“Once one understands that any organisation is essentially collective and individual identities, then the ‘organisational’ strategy refers to the manner in which its identity evolves. Strategy is concerned with how an organisation has become what it is and how it will become what it becomes, that is, how its identity evolves” (Stacey, 2003c p. 358).
2.2.4.1.3 SUMMING UP

Thinking of the organisation as a whole system with sub-systems leads management to believe that their intentions and actions are what causes the organisation to become what it is and what it will be. Strategies can be put into place to deliver measurable outcomes. Such thinking turns management attention away from ordinary, everyday life in organisations through which, it is proposed, organisational identity emerges (Stacey et al., 2002).

In mainstream literature what an organisation is and what it becomes can be understood from a strategic choice (Stacey, 2003c) and strategic design (Johnson & Scholes, 2002) perspective. As an alternative way of understanding what causes organisations to become what they are or why people within organisations do what they do, this literature review will look at the development of formative and rationalist teleologies and the proposed transformative teleology. Transformative teleology seeks to advance our understanding that the future is under perpetual construction and that meaning creation is an evolutionary process which occurs through local communicative interaction in the living present. From the perspective of transformative teleology self-organisation is the cause of the transformation. There is continuity, the known, as well as the potential for transformation, the unknown, at the same time, a paradox. What self-organises is the local communicative interaction between people in the living present, which is a process of interaction. It is in this process of relating that collective and individual identities are continuously replicated and potentially transformed. Therefore to make sense of organisational life you must pay attention to the ordinary, everyday communicative interaction between people.

2.2.4.1.2 QUESTIONING WHAT CAUSES HUMAN ACTION

This section highlights my original interest which was an evolutionary based look at co-operation amongst people as opposed to an obsession in modern day culture with competition. I found I was able to incorporate the evolutionary aspects of my readings into looking at causation of human action.

2.2.4.1.2.1 THE EVOLUTIONARY VIEW

Natural selection sets out that any living organism that has a characteristic that helps them to survive and reproduce will replace those that do not have this characteristic (Nicholson, 2000). Darwin believes all living organisms have a common ancestry and that changes in species are due to chance variation. Those variations that enable the organism to survive are passed on to future generations via heredity. It is survival-of-the-fittest (Capra, 1983, 1997). Natural selection is an inevitable consequence of the competitive breeding of organisms subject to limited resources (Cohen & Stewart, 1994). Therefore only the most adapted organism survive. As the evolution of a new species is due to chance variation there is no predetermined design and the cause is self-organising. This process of change is known as Adaptionist Teleology, with the movement of form to the most adapted state (Stacey et al., 2002). Darwin could not explain how the chance variations were passed on from generation to generation (i.e. the cause of the transformation).
Neo-Darwinists disagree with heredity as the means of copying biological characteristics, instead asserting that all evolutionary variation results from random mutation through random genetic changes. Evolution is seen as driven by pure chance followed by natural selection. This explanation of variation moves from the level of the organism to the level of the gene, with the interaction of the genes being of little importance (Stacey et al., 2002). Here the new form is caused by competitive selection on chance variations at the level of the genes. Once again there is no pre-determined design, only chance variation leading to novelty. Once again it is a competitive based perspective, survival of the fittest with the most adapted surviving, adaptionist teleology. However neo-darwinism carries with it the idea of optimal adaptation which in some sense is a pre-given form to which the organism aspires, through chance variation in the individual genes, trial and error. This is a type of formative teleology with movement toward an optimum. Evolution is progressive, with long periods of stability and steps towards perfection. The effect of evolution from this perspective is primarily stability not change. Transformative teleology focuses more on change rather than stability. The different teleologies provide a way of understanding stability and change in human organizations.
2.2.4.1.2.2 FORMATIVE AND RATIONALIST TELEOLOGY VIEW

Kant (1974) proposes a teleology in nature in which the purpose of something is to reach its final form, where that form is known at the beginning. So for example the seed for a plant will develop into that plant, change is confined from one form to another. Stacey, Griffin & Shaw (2002) state this is known as formative teleology. The parts self-organise to form the whole, which is already known, in order to recognise the part as part of the whole. In this way of thinking the unknowable cannot be produced.

Kant (1974) asserts that humans follow a causality which is based on freedom, whilst nature has no such freedom and follows a different causality. Rationalist teleology was the basis of human freedom; humans developed their own purpose through goal setting and actions to achieve those goals. Kant (1974) warns that formative teleology cannot be applied to humans, since human choice cannot be known in advance. Therefore rationalist teleology is applied. Here there is no self-organisation as humans design the organisations, which can be novel. Kant argues for the split between causality applied to nature and to human action.

This split meant that two different causal frameworks were necessary for explaining human action within or upon nature. From this perspective the organisation is understood to be like nature from one causal framework (formative teleology) with another causal framework (rationalist teleology) applying to the choices of managers.

Mainstream approaches to understanding human organisations combine both formative and rationalist teleologies to human action. Stacey, Griffin & Shaw (2002 p. 58) illustrate how this takes place:

“Rationalist teleology applies to the choosing manager… from whom the organisation is split off as a ‘thing’ to be understood. The organisation, that which is to be explained and operated upon, is then regarded as an objective phenomenon outside the choosing manager… equivalent to a natural phenomenon, to which Natural Law or Formative Teleology can be applied”.

From the mainstream perspective organisations become what they are because of the choices of managers and the predictability provided by the formative causal structure of the organisation. Historically this view has informed organisational studies.

2.2.4.1.2.3 HISTORICAL VIEW

Stacey, Griffin and Shaw (2002) describe historically different ways of thinking about organisations, commencing with Taylorism and scientific management. Management as a science puts the manager in the place of the scientist and the organisation in the place of the phenomena to be studied. Under scientific management the manager is thought of as an objective observer and the organisation a mechanism where the whole is the sum of the parts. The manager chooses the rules that drive the behaviour of the staff. This is a form of rationalist teleology as proposed by Kant (1974) however it only provides human freedom of choice for managers. Staff are merely rule following entities making up the whole organisation. The human resource movement added that when managers change the rules they should do so in a way that respects and motivates the staff. However the rationalist teleology still applies.
In later decades of the twentieth century organisations came to be viewed as systems. The manager remained the objective observer but the organisation no longer consisted of parts adding to a whole, instead the interaction of those parts was of prime importance. Whilst the interaction between the parts can be self-organised, it is towards a pre-determined goal or purpose. The system unfolds an enfolded pattern, rather than producing any novel pattern. This is a formative cause. The system can only do what it is designed to do. Movement of the system towards some optimal state is known as secular natural law teleology, which also applies to optimal behaviour (Stacey et al., 2002). Here the movement is regular and predictable and the sum of the parts is the whole. Where there is an observer, rationalist causality is present, whereby only the observer can exercise choice. The interaction of staff can be thought of in this context, where that interaction is chosen by a manager standing outside of that interaction. This regards human interaction as a system. Stacey, Griffin & Shaw (2002) believe the split between formative and rationalist teleology is inappropriate for understanding human action. Managers pay attention to the systems they attempt to control rather than in their own participation in what is going on. What is going on is referred to as managers paying attention to how they get things done anyway. This amounts to the informal self-organising day-to-day interactions between organisational members, which cannot be controlled (Stacey et al., 2002). Such interactions depend on human freedom and therefore the underlying theories of causality cannot be applied. The essential feature of human action is stated as co-operation in the living present (Stacey et al., 2002). This is the way people get things done and change them also. What is proposed is another way of understanding what causes organisations to become what they are, transformative teleology.

2.2.4.1.2.4 TRANSFORMATIVE TELEOLOGY VIEW

Stacey, Griffin & Shaw (2002 p. 97) relate that Prigogine asks the question “is the future given or is it under perpetual construction” this is reworded by Stacy as being whether causality in nature is better understood from a formative or transformative perspective. For Prigogine human creativity is essentially the same as nature’s creativity. The unknowable future emerges from interactions amongst entities in the here-and-now, likely to be novel where there is diversity within the entities. Further novelty can arise due to the amplification of small changes, which is unpredictable. So the source of change can lie in the differences amongst entities which are amplified. What emerges can be the transformed identities of the whole and the entities making up that whole at the same time. Such local micro interactions can transform the whole and themselves in a paradox of forming while being formed. This is different from Kantian thinking which Stacey (2003c) states is a dualism, in which human action is subject to rationalist causality and nature to formative causality. This is a ‘both/and’ way of thinking in which one side of the dualism applies at some time and the other at another time. It eliminates paradox, meaning both cannot be present ‘at the same time’. With transformative teleology the parts form and are formed by a whole which is under perpetual construction. This is paradoxical with the part forming the whole and being formed by it at the same time. Streatfield (2001) states that this process of forming and being formed at the same time produces repetitive patterns (the known) but always with the potential for transformation (the unknown).
The concept of time is also important in distinguishing transformative teleology from rationalist and formative teleology. With formative teleology the pattern that emerges now is merely the unfolding of what was already there in the past. The movement of time is from the past to the present, the future being a repetition of the past. Meaning is located in the past. With rationalist teleology what happens now is due to the choice of some future goal, so the movement is from the future to the present, the meaning is located in the future. For both meaning arises in the present, but with formative teleology meaning arises as movement from the past, and with rationalist teleology meaning arises as movement from the future. The present is merely a point in time. You cannot make sense of experience at a point and so the focus is the past or the future.

Stacey, Griffin & Shaw (2002) examine the present in terms of the micro-present, micro-past and micro-future. Referring to Mead (1972) the gesture takes its meaning from the response (micro-future), which only has meaning in relation to the gesture (micro-past) and the response in turn can act to change the gesture (micro-past). The experience of meaning occurs in the micro-present. Here the future is changing the past, as the past is changing the future. Meaning is not at a single point in the present but rather in this circular process of the present, which has potential for transformation and repetition. This is about the detailed interactions between people in the living present. With transformative teleology there is self-organisation which has the potential for transformation as well as continuity, at the same time.

2.2.4.1.2.5 SELF-ORGANISATION

Self-organisation is the transformative cause. Stacey, Griffin & Shaw (2002) argue that organisations become what they are due to the human need, both individually and collectively to express their identities and differences. Such identity and difference emerge through the transformative cause of self-organisation, that is relationship or co-operative interaction. Therefore what the organisation becomes emerges from the relationships of the staff, rather than the choices of individuals. Power, politics and conflict is at the centre of the co-operative social process through which joint action is taken. It is in the detailed interaction between people, in their relating, that their minds and selves arise while at the same time the co-operative interaction is formed. There is a simultaneous emergence of individual and group identity.

Most managers understand self-organisation in terms of the individual, it is the individual staff who organise themselves without any constraint (Stacey, 2003c). However from a complex responsive process of relating perspective "Self-organisation means that the agents in a system interact with each other according to their own local principles of interaction. This means they respond to others according to their own capacity to respond. They are enabled to respond in certain ways and constrained from responding in others by that capacity, which has emerged from their histories of interacting with others" (Stacey, 2003c p. 333).

Senior management can communicate strategic plans, visions and missions. They can design organisations and processes and procedures. What they cannot do is dictate or control the responses they will get. Senior management will in turn have to respond to
the responses they receive. This is what Stacey means by self-organisation in human terms. It is a process of interaction always present in human situations.

Making sense of organisational life from a transformative teleology perspective means having to pay attention to the ordinary, everyday communicative interaction between people at their own local level of interaction in the living present. Stacey (2001) states that it is in this process that the future is being perpetually constructed as identity and difference. What Stacey proposes is a theory of interaction, the theory of complex responsive processes of relating. These processes are fundamentally conversational in nature, forming and being formed by power relations. The focus is on the micro level where self-organisation is capable of producing emergent novel forms in relating and conversation (Stacey, 2003c). Diversity and deviance are viewed as essential to the internal capacity to change spontaneously.
2.2.4.1.2.6 CONVERSATION

“Central to the complex responsive process approach...is communicative interaction in the medium of symbols, and the intrinsic patterning properties of such communicative relating” (Stacey, 2001 p. 102).

It is in the communicative interaction that meaning is created and destroyed. Stacey points out that the most prominent form of human communication in the medium of symbols is talking and the extension of talking in reading and writing. The actions of talking, reading and writing fall into the category of discursive practice, the most common form being ordinary conversation. Stacey (2001) poses the question how is such communicative experience structured or patterned?

2.2.4.1.2.7 STRUCTURE OF COMMUNICATIVE PATTERNS

Firstly when people communicate they expect a response that is more or less associated with what they are saying, they may also expect the other person to be competent, compliant and reasonable in communicating or incompetent, rebellious and unreasonable. The expectation has a profound impact on how the people will interact together, and the meaning arising in the communication action. These expectations are formed in the very action of communicating together.

Secondly there is the turn-taking sequence, the basis of which is the expectations people have of each other. People make turns for themselves and others by asking questions, seeking advice, asking for clarification of issues, putting across their opinions etc.

Thirdly the turn taking and making give structure to the communicative interaction through sequencing and categorisation. An example of categorisation is who may talk and who may not.

Fourthly people use rhetorical devices to respond to each other’s utterances. These features, according to Stacey (2001), impart coherence and pattern to the ongoing communicative interactions of people. The patterning also has within it the possibility of change. It may only be a small detail that strikes people, but it can amplify into new patterns of relating.

These four conditions could be related to effective dialogue, which differs from Stacey’s ideal of free flowing conversation.

Referring to Meads (1972) silent private conversations (those conversations that people have with themselves in their head, referred to as mind) which take place simultaneously with public vocal conversation, Stacey (2001) believes the silent private conversations have the same patterns as the public vocal conversation. Therefore the private role play and the public interaction proceed at the same time in the same modes and one makes the other possible. “It is in the micro-interaction of their turn-taking conversation that people are perpetually constructing the living present and thus the future” (Stacey, 2001 p. 135). What is being constructed is the individual and collective identities of those interacting, and these can be both repeated, the known, and transformed, the unknown, at the same time, the paradox of perpetual construction.
2.2.4.1.2.8 POWER RELATIONS

A fundamental aspect of the theory of complex responsive processes of relating is power relating, which is informed from the work of Norbert Elias. Stacey (2005) points out that Elias argued that when you enter into a relationship you are constrained by, while at the same time constraining, the other person. But we are also enabled in our relating. The paradox is that human action is both enabled and constrained at the same time. Power relations come about in communicative interaction because the turn-taking and turn-making structure establishes patterns of inclusion and exclusion. Groups are formed to which people can feel they belong, and this is an essential aspect of personal identity. This belonging to one group can lead to contempt for others, as a ‘we’ identity is formed. Stacey states

“Together, communicative interaction and power relating constitute the iterative, self organising processes in which the social, collective and individual identities, individual minds and selves, all emerge, change and are sustained” (Stacey & Griffin, 2005 p. 5).

It is in relating that people become who they are both collectively and individually. Through their continual interaction people form and are formed by narrative and propositional themes that emerge as continuity, the known, and transformation, the unknown, paradoxically at the same time. These narrative and propositional themes organise themselves into conversations, and organise the experience of being together (Stacey, 2003c). If the organisation is a pattern of talk, then it only changes as its conversational life (power relations) evolves. So what facilitates and what blocks the emergence of new patterns of talk?
2.2.4.1.2.9 LEGITIMATE AND SHADOW THEMES

Stacey (2003c) discusses the legitimate and shadow themes. Legitimate themes organise conversations in which people feel able to give acceptable accounts of themselves and their actions as well as of others and their actions. Shadow themes organise the opposing conversations, that you would be more likely to engage in in small informal groups with people you know and trust. Shadow themes organise what people do not feel they can discuss open and freely. Ideology, official or unofficial legitimises a conversation. It is the ideology sustaining current power relations that makes conversation feel natural, acceptable and safe.

2.2.4.1.2.9.1 PROPOSITIONAL AND NARRATIVE THEMES

Formal themes that organise the experience of being together and therefore some aspects of power relations are what Stacey (2003c) refers to as propositional themes, typically expressed in written form, such as policies and procedures. They set out the official ideology. There may also be some narrative themes, such as how to talk to those more senior in the hierarchy. Informal relationships include all personal and social relationships, without which the organisation cannot function. Usually people are aware of the formal propositional themes that organise their experience of being together, and some of the narrative themes, in particular those that include some people in informal groupings but exclude others. “The patterns of communicative interaction and power relating take the form of narrative and propositional themes that organise the experience of being together” (Stacey & Griffin, 2005 p. 5). Simultaneous interaction between these themes makes up the conversational life of an organisation. The process of relating through conversation constrains that relating and establishes power relations. According to Stacey organisational change is represented by change in the themes that organise the experience of being together. These themes self-organise to produce new patterns of conversation.

“How people talk, what patterns that talk displays, is of primary importance to what the organisation is and what happens to it”. If the “…organisation is a pattern of talk (relational constraints) then an organisation changes only in so far as its conversational life evolves. Organisational change is the same thing as change in the pattern of talk and therefore the patterns of power relations” (Stacey, 2003c, p. 363).

You cannot develop a plan for conversations since no-one can predict what others will talk about. Conversation is self-organising.

“…themes organising the experience of relating in conversation continuously reproduce themselves and in so doing may transform themselves. Creativity, innovation and learning are all transformations of organising themes as they reproduce themselves” (Stacey, 2003c p. 375)

Utilising an analogue from the complexity science, Stacey states

“As people interact, they develop habitual, repetitive patterns of interaction, which they continually iterate, but never in exactly the same way. In other words, there are small differences in the interaction and it is a property of nonlinear interaction that small differences can be escalated into qualitative changes that are unknowable in advance” (Stacey & Griffin, 2005 p. 5).
Human interaction is perpetually constructing the future as continuity, the known and potential transformation, the unknown, at the same time. What is being perpetually constructed is human identity or human meaning.

“An organisation is what it is because of the history of relating and it will become what it becomes in the local communicative interaction and power relating between people in the living present” (Stacey, 2003c, p. 391).

I question the transformative power of self-organising conversation because I believe it is contextual. As Stacey points out there are power relations involved and therefore people need to play different roles depending on the context, which I argue will affect the language they use. I don’t find myself agreeing with the concept of self-organising free flowing conversation.
2.2.4.1.2.10 TRANSFORMATION THROUGH CONVERSATION

Stacey believes that the key to transformation is diversity. This diversity is generated by misunderstanding and the cross-fertilisation of different ways of talking. Stacey uses the analogues of random mutation and cross-over replication (Stacey, 2003c). Individuals and small groups can become identified with this diversity, being labelled as either conforming or deviant, orthodox or radical etc. This is the distinction between legitimate and shadow. The tension between the two is important because it is a potential source of diversity which is critical to spontaneous change. Gossip, rumour and ordinary conversation are all examples of shadow communications. These communications shape and are shaped by power relations, some which support and others which undermine the legitimate.

“…creative potential arises from the subversion of legitimate organising themes by shadow themes. What emerges then is new form of conversation, that is shifts in power relations” (Stacey, 2003c p. 377).

When the legitimate and shadow themes are in tension, there exists the potential for the emergence of new organisational direction.

This for me is a critical point and I have incorporated the concept of subversion into the current version of my dialogical continuum (Figure 4).

2.2.4.1.2.10.1 FREE FLOWING CONVERSATION

Free flowing conversation is associated with critical levels of misunderstanding and cross-fertilisation. If there is little misunderstanding between people in a group and they have a well established way of talking to each other, their conversations are likely to be repetitive. If there is too much misunderstanding due to differences amongst the people in the group there is likely to be a disintegration of communication. Another characteristic of free flowing conversation is the trust amongst the participants, that holds anxiety in place (Stacey, 2003c). New strategic direction (changes in the pattern of talk) will only arise if new shadow themes emerge to become legitimate, so communication must flow freely and not get caught in repetitive themes. When people who trust each other engage in shadow conversations they feel able to test boundaries especially those of current power relations and to talk about what is possible and what is not. If these conversations collusively support the legitimate, then the organisation cannot change, for change to occur the shadow conversation must undermine current power relations and legitimate forms of talk.

Conversation in the shadow is always informal and is self-organising. The content of these conversations is organised by narrative themes rather than propositional. You can characterise the conversational life of an organisation by the repetition of shadow conversations without any changes in the legitimate conversations. This is the dynamic of stability. In order for the new shadow themes to begin to emerge in legitimate conversations there must be trust and power relations that are co-operative and competitive. Conversations can become repetitive due to the rhetorical ploys of people which dismiss the opinions of others and prevent the conversation from exploring new areas (Stacey, 2003c). This will prevent the emergence of new knowledge.
Once again I propose that what Stacey is describing are conditions for a type of dialogue rather than Stacey’s ideal of self-organising free flowing conversation.

Shaw (2002) argues that the demand that management meetings must be planned and prepared with an agenda and outcomes for example, actually kills the spontaneity of ordinary conversation where new meaning/knowledge can emerge. Such meetings increase the possibility of people reconstructing the familiar. Members of the meeting act into the known which is engineered, thereby reducing the experience of uncertainty. Participants at the meeting know what they are there for, know what they should do and know what the outcome should be. Shaw is most concerned with the details of the local interactions between people in the living present. Under-specification of the details of the meeting can help increase the experience of diversity, disturbing routine responses and increasing the potential for new meaning/knowledge.
2.2.4.1.2.10.2 IDEAL CONVERSATION

Stacey (2003c) states that the purpose of the theory of complex responsive processes of relating is not to prescribe or to apply but to refocus attention, thereby taking different kinds of actions. Firstly Stacey points to the focus on the quality of participation. Here managers participate in direct interaction with other people. Management can never design the response to their gestures, such as visions, missions, false crises etc. Small changes can escalate and people can engage in self-organising conversations, often organised by shadow themes and from which unexpected responses can emerge. Therefore the focus is the unexpected responses from staff to manager’s intentions. The manager is a participant, not objective observer and must focus on the quality of participation in self-organising conversations from which responses emerge.

Secondly Stacey says that there has to be more focus on the quality of conversational life (Stacey, 2003c). Relationships between people in organisations are organised in conversations that form and are formed by the power relations between them. The key role of the manager is as participant in those conversations and power relations and their facilitation of different ways of conversing. They must be sensitive to the themes organising conversational learning. They must be aware of the rhetorical ploys being used to block the emergence of new conversational themes. They should try to understand the covert politics and unconscious group processes they are caught up in and how this might be trapping conversation in repetitive themes.

Thirdly Stacey relates that the theory of complex responsive processes of relating focuses attention on the quality of anxiety and how it is lived with (Stacey, 2003c). Themes that organise the experience of relating are not only vocal conversations, they can also challenge or change the silent conversation each person has with themselves. Change in an organisation can also be deeply personal change, reflected in the way a person changes the way they talk.

I ask myself is a change in the way we talk, a change in the language running through our heads?

Shifts in these themes can affect how people experience themselves and can threaten personal and collective identities. Shifting patterns of conversation can therefore give rise to anxiety, without which there can be no creation of new meaning/knowledge. How people manage this anxiety is therefore crucial to the organisation. Management must ask what it is that is being done that enables or disables everybody from living with the anxiety that change generates. There must be sufficient trust between those engaged in difficult conversations. Attention is focused on what is promoting or destroying trust in the organisation.

Fourthly attention is focused on the quality of diversity. This makes deviance and eccentricity important, along with unofficial ideologies that undermine current power relations. The unofficial ideologies are expressed in conversations organised by shadow themes. The importance is for people to make sense of their own involvement with others in the shadow conversations that express deviance. People can develop a greater sensitivity to the unconscious way that people together create categories of what is in and out and the effect this has on the people and organisation (Stacey, 2003c).
Finally Stacey points to the need to focus attention on unpredictability and paradox (Stacey, 2003c). From the complex responsive process perspective surprise is inevitable no matter how well informed and competent management are. Management must therefore learn to cope with not knowing. According to Stacey “It is not necessary to understand the whole in order to act; it is simply necessary to act on the basis of one’s own local understanding” (Stacey, 2003c p. 421). The complex responsive process of relating theory also focuses attention on the paradoxical nature of organisational life. Conversational patterns both enable and constrain what is being done. Themes organising the experience of relating in conversation are both stable and unstable at the same time. Complex responsive processes organise both conformity and deviance at the same time. Paradox can never be resolved or balanced only endlessly transformed.

Having now read other philosophers on dialogue I propose that Stacey’s concept of free flowing conversation depends upon certain conditions being met, as outlined above – for example a focus on the quality of participation. This is consistent with the setting of rules for effective dialogue such as that expressed by Gadamer and Habermas. Stacey seems to believe that each participant has the competence to participate because the emphasis is on ordinary conversation. I propose this is idealistic and that free flowing conversation can only occur once certain conditions have been filled, once the context has been set. I also find it interesting that despite Stacey being an anti-managerialist, he seems to imply that it is up to management to create the learning and environment necessary for free flowing conversation to occur.

2.2.4.1.2.11 SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS 3.1.1 AND 3.1.2

No system can be designed to deal with every eventuality and people will exercise their freedom to work around these systems, the known, to cope with the daily unknown. Stacey, Griffin & Shaw (2002) explain that a key aspect of the theory of complex responsive process of relating is to move away from viewing the organisation as a system subject to one type of causality (formative), and the manager as a maker of rationalist choices (rationalist teleology). Instead the organisation is viewed as a highly complex ongoing process of people relating to each other. This complex responsive process of relating is understood through the causal framework of transformative teleology.

This means that the relational processes of communication through which people accomplish joint action, are constructing the future in the living present, and that future is unknown in advance. When people communicate with each other there is scope for different interpretations. Diversity amongst people is a key. These differences in interpretation can be the source of novelty. It is in the ongoing differences in interpretation that individual and collective identities are continually recreated, the known, and potentially transformed, the unknown. The emphasis is on understanding real human interaction in organisations. It privileges relationships between people as the transformative cause of the identity of the organisation, with conversation as the central activity of organising, in particular free flowing conversation, characterised by continual difference in interpretation.
People co-create the meaning of what they are doing as they act into the unknown, and co-create their future in interaction with each other. So this is the causal framework of transformative teleology where from the interaction in the living present, emerges the unknowable future.

Stacey (2005 p. 14) states “...a key aspect of the theory of complex responsive processes is its notion of transformative causality where human interaction patterns itself, as repetition and potential transformation at the same time, from within that interaction. In other words, interaction is its own cause without any ‘whole’ having causal power above or below that interaction”.

With the complex responsive process of relating individual mind and group interactions form and are formed by each other at the same time (Stacey, 2001). Individual and group are the same phenomenon, and meaning emerges in people’s communicative interaction in their local situation in the present. These interactions are competitive and cooperative at the same time (the paradox). Stacey states that “Meaning and therefore knowledge arise in the local, detailed, ordinary communicative interaction of people in organisations in the living present” (Stacey, 2001 p. 220). Communicative interaction is primarily in the form of conversation. Collective and individual identity are continuously replicated and potentially transformed in the communicative interaction between people. This is how the organisation evolves, “the future of an organisation is perpetually constructed in the conversational exchanges of its members as they carry out their tasks” (Stacey, 2001 p. 181).

Communicative interaction is human relationship which is a living process and this cannot be managed, controlled or owned. Systems which record and store data, as well as all of the ‘systems’ people construct, are tools which people use in their communicative interaction with each other. Some tools are mistaken for the communicative interaction itself or even the organisation itself, for example visions, missions, values, policies etc. Stacey (2003c) refers to such tools as reified symbols which are used as if they have an independent reality. They represent propositional themes which organise our experience of being together.

Stacey (2001) asserts that the complex responsive process theory of relating focuses attention on what people are doing in the living present rather than on what they are thinking of doing in the future. The focus is on the pattern of relating between people in the living present, on the patterns of turn taking/turn making in their interactions, who is talking and who is being silenced, who is being included and who is being excluded and how all of this is taking place. Such constraint is power, which is located in the relationship between people. “How people talk, what patterns that talk displays, is of primary importance to what the organisation is and what happens to it” (Stacey, 2003c p. 363). From this perspective the strategic direction an organisation follows emerges as a pattern in the way people talk.
2.2.4.1.3 QUESTIONING PRIVILEGING OF THE INDIVIDUAL

2.2.4.1.3.1 THE INDIVIDUAL VIEW

Traditional ways of thinking about organisations privilege the individual. In highlighting Strategic Choice Theory Stacey states its essence:

“…is that it assumes that it is possible for powerful individuals to stand outside their organisations and model them in the interest of controlling them. The theory assumes that organisations change successfully when top executives form the right intention for the overall future shape of the whole organisation and specify in enough detail how this is to be achieved. It prescribes the prior design of change and then the installation of that change.” (Stacey, 2003c p. 51).

Strategic choice theory also implies a particular theory of human psychology which is cognitivism, the logical, rational human mind where emotion is relatively unimportant in determining how humans behave. As Stacey points out the motivation of staff towards achievement of management goals utilised humanistic psychology, which still privileges the individual. The organisation is viewed as a cybernetic system which operates negative feedback systems leading to stable equilibrium. Therefore the organisation will adapt to its environment at the whole of organisation level. There is little attention to human interaction within the organisation. Both cybernetics and cognitivism assume there is a reality to be dealt with, which reality exists prior to people perceiving it (Stacey, 2003c). There is no importance given to the social construction of reality (a realist as opposed to an anti-realist position).

Stacey (2003c) elaborates further that with strategic choice theory management produce a blueprint guiding the development of the organisation into the future. This is the plan against which results will be measured. The implementation of the plan requires a suitable structure, designed by management. The main force for stability within the organisation will be management information and control systems. The culture of the organisation should fit the particular strategies being pursued. The manager adopts the position of objective observer of the organisational system. There is a clear linear cause and effect in their action. If they do X, Y will result. This type of thinking has conditioned management’s responsiveness to management theories. In essence they should be capable of application upon the organisational system.

From a strategic choice theory perspective human interaction is understood in systemic terms, organisational structures, departments, project teams etc. Deviant or eccentric behaviour is viewed as a dangerous disruption to the system (Stacey, 2003c). Strategic choice theory focuses management attention on stability, consistency and harmony. The theory deals with the known, anything unexpected that happens usually leads to blame.

Johnson and Scholes (2002) similarly describe strategy as design. Here strategy is the responsibility of senior management, and senior management lead the development of strategy within organisations.

“…strategy development can be a logical process in which economic forces and constraints on the organisation are weighed carefully through analytic and evaluative techniques to establish clear strategic direction and in turn carefully
planned in its implementation”. Johnson and Scholes further assert that this is “...perhaps the most commonly held view about how strategy is developed and what managing strategy is about” (Johnson & Scholes, 2002 p. 23).

Senior management plan the destiny of the organisation. They make the decisions which through the hierarchy are carried out by those below them. Cause and effect are linear and management is rational using logical analysis to reach optimal logical conclusions. As such the organisation is a rational system, which can be controlled in a rational way. The organisational structure will be suited to the desired strategy and the management information and control systems will facilitate the strategic direction through negative feedback loops, as in cybernetic systems. According to Johnson and Scholes

“Rationality is also deeply rooted in our way of thinking and in our systems of education over the past two thousand years. In this sense the [strategic] design lens is deeply embedded in our human psyche. So, for example, even when managers do not report that strategy is actually developed in ways the design lens suggests, they often think it should be.” (Johnson & Scholes, 2002 p. 41).

The strategic design lens purports that the organisation becomes what it is due to the deliberate intention of senior management who position the organisation through a rational, analytic, structured and directive process (Johnson & Scholes, 2002).

There are a number of underlying assumptions with these ways of understanding organisations that, in my experience, have never been questioned, such as the cause of organisational direction being due to rational choices of management applied to a management designed system. Such assumptions are taken for granted. The complex responsive processes of relating theory seeks to question these assumptions and in so doing deepen our understanding of organisations and how they become.

2.2.4.1.3.2 THE RELATIONAL VIEW

The move away from thinking of the organisation as a system to thinking about organising as the ongoing processes of people relating to each other is the theory of complex responsive processes of relating. This theory is originated by Professor Ralph Stacey and contributed to by Patricia Shaw, Douglas Griffin, Jose Fonseca and Philip Streatfield (Fonseca, 2002; D. Griffin, 2002; Shaw, 2002; Stacey, 1997, 2001, 2003c; Stacey et al., 2002; Streatfield, 2001). Traditionally managers have reported things that have gone wrong with plans, systems and procedures, whilst ignoring how they ‘got things done, anyway’, instead resolving the issues with yet more plans, systems and procedures. With systems thinking what an organisation becomes is caused by individual choice. Managers can step outside the organisational processes to enable them to design systems and stay in control. What Stacey, Griffin & Shaw (2002) are proposing is that it is the relationships between people in the organisation which is the transformative cause of organisational identity. Conversation is the central activity of organising. “This means that people jointly create the meaning of what they are doing when they act into the unknown, co-creating their future in interaction with others” (Stacey et al., 2002 p. 194).
2.2.4.1.3.2.1 MEAD’S CONVERSATION OF GESTURES THEORY

The basis for the theory of complex responsive processes of relating comes from the work of George Mead (1972) and his theory of the Conversation of Gestures. Stacey (Stacey, 2003a) refers to the work of Charles Hegel, where mind is manifested in social institutions or ways of life, which give identities to individuals.

Taylor (1980 p. 93) states that Hegel believed “…that what is most important for man can only be attained in relation to the public life of a community, not in the private self-definition of the alienated individual…The public life which expresses at least some of our important norms must be that of a state”.

Mead (1972) following on from Hegel, argued that human societies are not possible without human minds and selves, and human minds and selves are not possible without human societies. For Mead the behaviour of all living organisms has a basically social aspect. Stacey (2003a) concludes that for Mead the social act was defined as a gesture which called forth a response from another which together create meaning. Meaning lies in the gesture and the response i.e. in the social act as a whole. “Knowing becomes a property of interaction, or relationship” (Stacey, 2003a p. 6).

Stacey (2001) states that meaning emerges in the living present where the immediate/micro future (the response) acts back on the micro past (gesture) to change its meaning. Meaning is located in the circular interaction between gesture and response in the living present. The capacity to experience the same response in oneself as in another person is a form of consciousness, which together with meaning emerges in the social conversation of gestures (Mead, 1972). There also emerges the potential for more sophisticated cooperation. Therefore importantly, according to Stacey, human social forms and human consciousness both emerge at the same time, each forming the other (Stacey, 2001). As people interact with each other there is the possibility of a pause prior to making a gesture. The individual in silent conversation can carry out a role play as to what the other person’s response is likely to be to the gesture, a form of thinking where the individual makes a gesture to himself bringing forth responses in himself.

Mead (1972) refers to the vocal gesture as a significant symbol. Here the individual making a gesture can experience in their own bodies a similar response to that which their gesture provokes in the person to whom the gesture is made. In this sense the person making the gesture can know what they are doing, that is they can predict the consequences of their gesture. With the vocal gesture we can hear the sounds made in much the same way as others hear them, as opposed to say our own facial expressions which we cannot see. The development of language is of major importance in the development of consciousness and more sophisticated forms of society. “Mind and society emerge together in the medium of language” (Stacey, 2001 p. 84). There is the public verbal conversation and the private silent conversation, both occurring at the same time, forming and being formed by each other.

As we increasingly interact with more people more possible responses enter into the private role playing prior to the gesture. Therefore the ability to predict the response of many others evolves and becomes generalised, to the point where the individual can begin to predict the response of a group of people not simply to one’s gestures but also to one’s self. The individual can make assumptions about the attitudes of the group toward him, the ‘me’. However his response, the ‘I’ is always potentially unpredictable. Stacey summarises this as “...each of us may respond in many different ways to our
perception of the views others have of us” (Stacey, 2001 p. 88). This points to the importance of diversity in potential transformation.

The complex responsive process of relating theory puts forward that “…sophisticated interaction could not take place without self-conscious minds but nor could those self-conscious minds exist without that sophisticated form of cooperation” (Stacey, 2001 p. 88).

Individual minds/selves exist but emerge in interaction with other people, rather than arising in the individual. With mind there is the experience of both continuity of the familiar and potential transformation. From this perspective individual and collective identity is continuously reproduced and transformed in relational interaction between people.

As can readily be seen from the text above, I took the view of organisations becoming what they are and will be from the point of view of strategy formulation, as it allowed easier analysis of materials and lent itself to more conventional research application. I no longer will be constrained by the strategy milestone, although it will assist in understanding the official ideology. What I now put forward is that we all play roles within different contexts, where each role is signified by the language used. From a postmodern pragmatic perspective, and in agreement with Stacey, we are how we talk. In recognition of this heuristic insight I composed the following:

Descartes says
Cogito ergo sum
Which privileges the one
I say
Colloquimur ergo sum ateque sumus
Which privileges no one

Colloquimur ergo sum ateque sumus means “We converse therefore we are” and is for me a more ethical perspective as it does not privilege the individual as the creator of truth. This is a key reason I was so attracted to the management philosophy of Stacey, whom I view as a non-managerialist.

2.2.4.2 HOISTING THE MAIN SAIL

2.2.4.2.1 REALITY, MIND DEPENDENT OR MIND INDEPENDENT

Rorty (1991), a major philosophical authority who I understand as a postmodern pragmatist, establishes that the early traditions of Western Culture centred around the search for Truth. Truth was something that was to be pursued for its own sake, not because it was good for you or your community.

“The combination of Socratic alienation and Platonic hope gives rise to the idea of the intellectual as someone who is in touch with the nature of things, not by way of the opinions of his community, but in a more immediate way. Plato developed the idea of such an intellectual by means of distinctions between knowledge and opinion, and between appearance and reality. Such distinctions conspire to produce the idea that rational inquiry should make visible a realm to
which non-intellectuals have little access, and of whose very existence they may be doubtful.” (Rorty, 1991 pp. 21-22).

This objective knowledge can point to what human beings are really like in a universal sense. To understand this the individual must step outside of their community long enough to examine it and establish what it has in common with every other community. According to Rorty this grounds solidarity in objectivity and is a ‘realist’ position, where truth corresponds to reality.

According to Searle (1997) realists believe that there is a reality totally independent of our representation (perceptions, language, beliefs, thought) of it – an objective reality. Such reality is completely independent of our minds. This means that if we never existed most of the world would have remained unaffected. Realists believe that the mind is the mirror of reality and that objects existing outside of the mind can be represented in a way that is adequate, accurate and true (Appignanesi & Garratt, 1999). Anti-realists believe there is no reality independent of our representations. For the anti-realist it is impossible that there can be a mind-independent reality (this position is similar to Solipsism where it is believed only mental states exist).

It makes more sense to me that the language we use to describe reality is socially constructed, and that there are multiple such realities.

In agreement with Grenz (1996) I don’t believe that a single correct worldview can be constructed. There are many views and many worlds. Interpretation is therefore critical. Postmodernism moved from the realist objective world to a constructionist outlook. Mainstream thinking has the following main assumption

“… we assume that the world is objectively real, that it displays an order inherent to itself and independent of human activity. Most of us assume that the human mind is capable of more or less accurately mirroring the external nonhuman reality; most of us also assume that language, as a product of the human mind, provides an adequate means of declaring to ourselves and to others what the world is like” (Grenz, 1996 p. 41).

2.2.4.2.1 THE LINGUISTIC TURN

The realist, believing that there is an objective reality, assumes we have direct access to the world independent of language and indeed that language follows from our observations of this objective, given world. What this means is that our discourse is capable of representing the world as it actually is (representationalist) (Grenz, 1996). This posits that “there is a real world beyond the dark confines in which the unenlightened are kept prisoner” (Calder, 2003 p. 7).

Postmodernists argue that we do not merely encounter a world out there but rather we construct the world using concepts we bring to it. What constructivists alert us to, according to Grenz (1996) is the importance of language in providing us with access to the world. From such a perspective a social reality is constructed through our common language. Language constructs meaning rather than revealing an objective reality already there. This meaning is constantly changing due to changes in the social context and consequently the world as we see it through language also continually changes.
If we accept that there are multiple realities and that we construct those realities through our use of language, it makes sense to me that in order to change ourselves individually or collectively we must change the language we use. With this view truth in any subject matter is made rather than found. If there was an objective reality, truth would be found, not made and there would be a universal truth.

“Postmoderns are inclined to prize difference over uniformity and to respect the local and particular more than the universal” (Grenz, 1996 p. 49).

2.2.4.2.1.2 POSTMODERN PRAGMATISM

Richard Rorty when answering the criticism of realists explains that it is as “…if philosophers who, like myself, do not believe in “mind-independent reality” must deny that there were mountains before people had the idea of “mountain” in their minds or the word “mountain” in their language. But nobody denies that. Nobody thinks there is a chain of causes that makes mountains an effect of thoughts or words. What people like Kuhn, Derrida, and I believe is that it is pointless to ask whether there really are mountains or whether it is merely convenient for us to talk about mountains” (Rorty, 1998 p. 72).

Rorty believes that trying to understand and distinguish what exists in itself and what exists only in relation to human minds is no longer worth pursuing. What pragmatists are interested in is that which will make a difference to practice.

“Nothing, including the nature of truth and knowledge, is worth worrying about if this worry will make no difference to practice. But there are all sorts of ways of making a difference. One of them is by slowly, over a long period of time, changing what Wittgenstein called the pictures that hold us captive…old pictures may have disadvantages that can be avoided by the sketching of new pictures” (Rorty, 1998 p. 80).

I find myself particularly taken with Rorty’s matter of fact approach towards distinguishing between mind dependent and mind independent reality. Undoubtedly much time can be spent discussing the issue of whether mountains only exist in our minds or whether they are part of an objective reality, but in the end could it ever be resolved and would it change anything? Would it have some practical use? This perspective makes more sense to me than trying to argue that all reality is mind dependent.

Pragmatists believe that the truth is what is good for us to believe (Rorty, 1991).
2.2.4.2.1.3 DESCRIPTION AND RERDESCRIPTION

Rorty (1989) distinguished between the world and truth ‘being out there’. Rorty explains that the world is not merely a mental state created by us. Most things in space and time are the effects of other causes besides human mental states. However when it comes to truth there can be no truth without sentences. Sentences are elements of human language, a human creation. Therefore truth, as language, cannot exist independently of the human mind, truth is created by us.

“The world is out there, but descriptions of the world are not. Only descriptions of the world can be true or false. The world on its own – unaided by the describing activities of human beings – cannot” (Rorty, 1989 p. 5).

Rorty states that if we can accept that most of reality is indifferent to our descriptions of it and that the human self is created by use of a vocabulary then we can concur with the Romantic idea that truth is made rather than found, truth being languages in that context.

“What the Romantics expressed as the claim that imagination, rather than reason, is the central human faculty was the realisation that a talent for speaking differently, rather than arguing well, is the chief instrument of cultural change” (Rorty, 1989 p. 7). According to Rorty this is a Nietzschean view which drops the appearance-reality description and states that “…to change how we talk is to change what, for our own purposes, we are” (Rorty, 1989 p. 20).

Changing how we talk is termed by Rorty as redescription. Redescription makes new and different things possible when you expand your repertoire of alternative descriptions. Rorty believes that an aim of philosophy can be to keep the conversation going and to encourage description rather than trying to find an alternative truth (Rorty, 1980). In agreement with the later philosophical works of Wittgenstein (Skirbekk & Gilje, 2001; Wittgenstein, 1953) which rejected the thesis of a one-to-one relation between language and reality and stated that words and sentences have different meaning according to the context, Rorty also views the function of words as dependent on the context in which we use those words, so different vocabularies serve different purposes. However no single vocabulary will bring us closer to ‘a reality’. There is no description-independent way the world is.

Calder relates that for Rorty progress is change in the ways we talk.

“Vocabularies clash and get compared; the ones which look bad are discarded, and the ones which look better survive. This depends on unpredictable redescription which confounds the rules of existing language games” (Calder, 2003 p. 44).

This sits well with the complexity science metaphor of self-organisation and chaos theory, where small differences in initial local conditions can be amplified into universal differences. This is a contingent view where change happens by chance.
2.2.4.2.1.4 METAPHOR

Metaphor can stimulate us to come up with a fresh vocabulary, allowing redescription. The use of metaphor as a means of encouraging creativity is well documented (M. Lissack & Roos, 2000; M. R. Lissack, 1997; Morgan, 1997). Perhaps for this reason Rorty holds poets in such esteem as the maker of new languages and new worlds. The metaphor I have used in this proposal is that of being on a voyage of discovery, an expedition, exploring seas of thought. With my poetic voice I describe the voyage thus:

Voyage of Discovery

Setting sail
Across seas of thought
Exploring thinkers
For enlightenment sought

No destination
But far to go
My sails full of wind
And my progress slow

Calling to port
To bathe a while
Then off again
With frown turned to smile

So many ports
So big a sea
So much to discover
When the self is set free

And what of the purpose
For such a trip
Perhaps to realise
We are all anchored ships

“For Rorty beliefs, desires and morals are something each of us is and not something separate which has those beliefs and desires. Therefore, for example, when we learn our beliefs can change and we are not constrained by the truth of ourselves any more than we are by the truth of the external world…the self, like language, is entirely contingent. Like anything else it can be redescribed” (Calder, 2003 p. 52)

This part of my voyage has allowed me to question reality and to arrive in a port where I find a truth that complements the thinking of Stacey (Stacey, 2001, 2003c) namely the importance of conversation as the transformative cause of identity. For Rorty transformation is caused by redescription through use of language, for Stacey it is
ordinary conversation. Both views will allow me to continue with the development of
my dialogical continuum (Figure 4).

2.2.4.2.2 DIALOGUE, A PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

Since immersing myself in the work of Stacey, I have hoisted the main sails and let the
winds of philosophy guide my voyage. I have arrived at a point where I now question
the idealism of Stacey and in particular his assertion concerning dialogue which is that
“increasingly, systemic theories are focusing on conversations, story and
narrative. However the tendency is to seek to design special forms of
conversation known as dialogue and special forums such as communities of
practice. From the complex responsive processes perspective the emphasis is on
ordinary, everyday conversation” (Stacey, 2003c p. 417).

I believe dialogue has more to offer, and argue that Stacey’s own concept of free
flowing conversation is itself dialogically based. In developing my own line of thought
about dialogue I offer the following account of great thinkers and philosophers whose
thoughts have provoked a change in my own.

2.2.4.2.2.1 SOCRATES

Socrates tried to awaken people, “to get them to think about their own situation and
reflect on the fundamental viewpoints that guided their actions and words” (Skirbekk &
Gilje, 2001 p. 41). Socrates engaged people in dialogue. For such dialogue to reveal
the truth of a viewpoint neither party could enter a discussion with their minds already
made up, merely using the debate to win others over, which Socrates referred to as
persuading by rhetoric. This was being persuaded to believe something without
understanding the reasons. Socrates instead believed in convincing by reason, which is
being convinced something is true and right because you understand the reasons
supporting the conclusion. Convincing by reason requires an open debate, where each
participant co-operates to make the subject as clear as possible. The participants must
also see themselves as equals to allow for free discussion. The goal of such dialogue is
the search for truer insight. Socrates believed that if you thought differently due to the
insights gained you would act differently (Skirbekk & Gilje, 2001). Plato, in
speculating on the method of evolving truth by Socrates states it was a dialectic/logic
method.

“The great majority of men think without knowing why they think as they
do…Dialectic is (the) art of thinking in concepts; concepts and not sensations or
images, constitute the essential objects of thought” (Thilly, 1957 p. 76).

This position assumes that the world perceived by our senses is not the true world, and
to have genuine knowledge you must know the permanent and unchangeable essence of
things.

Although I don’t concur with the mind independent reality, I believe that Socratic
dialogue has many similarities to Stacey’s idea of free flowing conversation,
particularly with reference to power relations and being equal in that sense.

Bakhtin (1984) speaks of the Socratic notion of the dialogic nature of truth. Truth is not
born nor is it found inside the head of the individual. Rather truth emerges between
people collectively searching for the truth in the process of their dialogic interaction. Bakhtin points to the two basic devices of Socratic dialogue. Syncrisis is the juxtaposition of various points of view on specific objects, whilst anacrisis is the elicitation and provocation of words from other participants, forcing them to express their opinions thoroughly. Bakhtin, in referring to genres states that Socratic dialogue comes from the seriocomical genre. Also coming from this genre is menippean satire (see below). Socratic dialogue, according to Bakhtin, is not part of a rhetorical genre, but grows out of a folk-carnivalistic base (M. Bakhtin, 1984).

Dialectic is derived from Greek philosophy and the word ‘dialego’ meaning ‘to discuss’. “Dialectic was conceived as the philosophical dialogue whereby we arrive at true standpoints through public discourse” (Skirbekk & Gilje, 2001 p. 310). Referring to Hegel, Skirbekk & Gilje (2001) describe dialectical thought as being case-oriented thought, where the deficiencies in the case itself drive us towards a truer position. Reflection is seen as a driving force because it can lead to recognition of deficiencies and creates an urge to overcome these deficiencies. Overcoming in this sense means abolishing the deficient aspects in a position, retaining those non-deficient aspects and thereby raising the position to a higher level. This is the Hegelian thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Hegel believed that thinking negatively was “seeking the deficiencies of the present position so that we are driven towards greater insight” (Skirbekk & Gilje, 2001 p. 311). To think of getting to an absolute truth is idealistic but through dialectics “maybe we won’t get to the truth but at least we will get some of the way there” (Kogler, 1999 p. 44).

2.2.4.2.2 GADAMER

Using the metaphor of play, Gadamer believed that dialogue was structurally related to play. Essential to play is that the participant gives themselves over fully to what is being played. If the game proceeds smoothly the participants should not stand outside or above what is being played and will become fully absorbed in the activity (Kogler, 1999). Warnke (1987) expands on this idea by explaining that for Gadamer understanding is primarily coming to an understanding with others, a shared understanding. Gadamer proposed a dialogic structure of shared understanding. For genuine conversation each participant must be concerned entirely with the subject matter, and arriving at the truth with regard to it. To be concerned entirely with the subject matter, presupposes a docta ignorantia where each participant recognises their fallibility and the fact they are finite and historical. Docta ignorantia is a Socratic knowledge which is the knowledge we do not know and openness to the possible truths of other views. To arrive at the truth with regard to the subject matter each participant must be concerned with discovering the real strength of every other participant’s position, and each participant must be taken seriously as an equal dialogue partner, equally capable of illuminating the subject matter. From this perspective Gadamer’s shared understanding is the transformation of initial positions of all the participants in the discussion (Warnke, 1987).
This again can be related to Stacey’s transformative conversation but without the idea that the conversation is free flowing. More and more I begin to understand that Stacey has in fact put conditions on his concept of free flowing conversation and as such joins a line headed by many such as Gadamer who list preconditions for dialogue to discover some truth. It was having read Warnke’s account of Gadamer that I first began to question the idealistic views I retained of Stacey.

Gadamer proposed that following the Socratic model understanding did not involve acquiescing with other participant’s opinions or submitting to traditional authorities. Participants could agree to disagree, and still reach a new understanding. This is in line with the Hegelian concept of synthesis. From this perspective consensus is a new understanding of the issues in question (Warnke, 1987).

This is an important point and a fundamental distinction. In everyday conversation consensus can mean the opposite and merely be an acquiescence to other participants power, or to the lowest common denominator where such power is equal amongst each participant.

2.2.4.2.3 HABERMAS

Habermas stipulates an ideal speech situation (Habermas, 1990, 1993), where rational discourse is the force of better argument. This presupposes a dialogical situation where all participants have freedom of access and equal rights to participate. There is truthfulness on the part of all participants and an absence of coercion in taking positions. These are the presuppositions of argumentation. For the argumentation ideal, Habermas states that:

1. All voices in any way relevant get a hearing
2. Best arguments available to us given our present state of knowledge are brought to bear
3. Only the unforced force of the better argument determines the yes and no responses of participants” (Habermas, 1993 p. 163).

Further expanding on these conditions for an ideal dialogue Habermas asserts that each participant must be allowed to question any assertion whatever, to introduce any assertion whatever and to express attitudes, desires and needs. No participant can be prevented, whether by internal or external coercion, from exercising their rights (Habermas, 1990). Habermas also discussed the concept of communicative competence, which is the capacity, of the participants in a dialogue, for communicative rationality in and through language (Brand, 1990).

“I understand those competences which make a subject capable of speech and action, that is able to participate in processes in which shared understanding is reached maintaining at the same time his or her identity” (Brand, 1990 p. 18).

Habermas believed that to genuinely initiate and participate in communication, communicative competence was required.
2.2.4.2.4 BAKHTIN

In commenting on the writings of Bakhtin, Shotter & Billig (1998) state that a dialogical event always gives rise to something unique and unrepeatable. Dialogue is between people and is, in agreement with Stacey (2003c), relational. Relations were repressed in the Cartesian, mechanistic world view which ignored to a great extent our everyday social lives together. For Bakhtin communication is in continual tension between contrary forces, which he terms ‘centripetal’ and ‘centrifugal’ (Shotter & Billig, 1998). Centripetal forces push towards unity, agreement and monologue, whilst centrifugal forces seek multiplicity, disagreement and heteroglossia (dilemmatic). Both these forces occur simultaneously in communication. This position brings to mind the thesis (centripetal) and antithesis (centrifugal) of Hegel. “As we speak…so our utterances…are marked by a dialectic tension between centrifugal and centripetal tendencies” (Shotter & Billig, 1998 p.17). Bakhtin believed that only if we are prepared to change our centripetal ways and balance them with ways of a more centrifugal kind, could we overcome official ideologies (Shotter & Billig, 1998). Bakhtin’s dialogical strategy to achieve such subversion of the official ideologies of his time, was to draw upon the comic, ironic and parodic capacities of language using the metaphor of carnival (Morrow, 1998).

2.2.4.2.4.1 CARNIVAL

Bakhtin believed in the power of carnival to shatter the appearance of unity within diversity, and the false impression of stability created by established and official ideologies.

“Carnival is the ‘jesterly’ play of difference aiming for the creation of an alternative or reversible world order”. Carnival is “playfully, that is, non-violently subversive as it intends both to deconstruct a “real” world and reconstruct a “possible” world at the same time” (Jung, 1998 p. 105). Carnival was seen by Bakhtin as an antidote to violence and domination, both of which denied genuine dialogue.

“The true rebel is the one who senses and cultivates his or her allegiance to dialogue and human solidarity with no intention of obliterating the Other. His or her rebellion or non violent subversion stands tall ‘midway’ between silence and murder in refusing to accept being what he or she is” (Jung, 1998 p. 107). According to Bernard-Donals (1998) in the 1980’s Gayatri Spivak used the term subaltern to describe those people who occupied a marginal position or had a fragmented voice in relation to the dominant culture and language. Potentially such subalterns were forever silenced and spoken for. Carnival discourse was seen by Bakhtin as being unofficial, unsanctioned and undermining official language, which was potentially disruptive, and could be used by the rebel subaltern. Bakhtin believes in the power of carnival to shatter the appearance of unity and the false impression of stability created by established and official ideologies (Burkitt, 1998). Authorities with established ideologies favour what is stable and fixed. Carnival can create conditions of fluidity and ambiguity which elevate change and becoming over stable and fixed (Burkitt, 1998). In the sense used by Bakhtin, carnival can be seen as a metaphor for the overthrow of the established view of the world through heretical/critical discourses.
This use of the carnival metaphor opened up spaces in my thought with regards to subversion and its necessity for the transformation of dialogue towards dialogical freedom.

### 2.2.4.2.2.2.4.2 MENIPPEAN DIALOGUE

Bakhtin refers to menippean as belonging to the serio-comical genre (M. Bakhtin, 1984). This is a carvinalised genre and is capable of penetrating other genres. Compared to the Socratic dialogue there is more weight to the comic element. There is considerable freedom of plot with unrestrained use of the creation of extraordinary situations for the provoking or testing of a truth. There can be adventures of an idea or truth (not a human character) in the world, which can take place in horrible, depraved and evil places. Bakhtin states that the

"...characteristics for the menippa are scandal scenes, eccentric behaviour, inappropriate speeches and performances, that is, all sorts of violations of the generally accepted and customary course of events and the established norms of behaviour and etiquette, including manners of speech" (M. Bakhtin, 1984 p. 117).

According to Bakhtin, menippa is capable of infiltrating other dialogic genres and subjecting them to transformation. With carnival everyone is an active participant and everyone communes in the carnival act. The carnivalesque life suspends laws, prohibitions and restrictions of ordinary life. There is no inequality and no distance between people. The all powerful socio-hierarchical relationships of non-carnival life are counterposed by new modes of interrelationships between people which are eccentric and inappropriate. Bakhtin refers to the carnival square which was an arena for carnival acts. People in the middle ages had two lives: The official which was serious, gloomy, subjugated to the strict hierarchical order, and the life of carnival square which was free, unrestricted, full of ambivalent laughter, blasphemy and familiar contact with everything and everyone (M. Bakhtin, 1984).

I often feel more at ease in the canteen area of the company where the official ideology of the company is least likely to extend, and where you are most likely to encounter forms of subversion.

### 2.2.4.2.2.5 SHOTTER

Shotter (1993) points to the fact that there is always a tendency for a group of people to establish themselves as rulers and to set the social conditions under which the ruled will live, thereby effectively eliminating opposition to their dominant ideologies.

"...so powerful is our talk in affecting our relations to others, that certain ways of talking take on an ‘official’ or ‘sacrosanct’ form, and one that is sanctioned for taking ‘against’ them" (Shotter, 1993 p. 4)

However in a true democracy people do not need such ‘experts’ to run their affairs for them. Ordinary people should have the ability and right to play a part in dialogues shaping their lives, and should have what they have to say taken seriously (Shotter, 1993).

"...to talk in new ways, is to ‘construct’ new forms of social relations, and, to construct new forms of social relation (of self-other relationships) is to construct new ways of being (of person-world relations) for ourselves” (Shotter, 1993 p. 9).
The importance of conducting dialogue face to face is highlighted by Vygotsky, “Dialogue presupposes visual perception of the interlocutor (of his mimics and gestures) as well as an acoustic perception of speech intonation. This allows the understanding of thought through hints and allusions. Only in oral speech do we find the kind of conversation where…speech is only a supplement to the glances between the interlocutors” (Vygotsky, 1987 p. 271).

In commenting on his ideal dialogue Vygotsky states “When the thoughts and consciousness of the interlocutors are one, the role of speech in the achievement of flawless understanding is reduced to a minimum…Where the thoughts of the interlocutors focus on a common subject, full understanding can be realised with maximal speech abbreviation and an extremely simplified syntax. Where they do not, understanding cannot be achieved even through expanded speech. Thus two people who attribute different content to the same word or who have fundamentally different perspectives often fail to achieve understanding. As Tolstoy says, people who think in original ways and in isolation find it difficult to understand the thoughts of others. They also tend to be particularly attached to their own thought. In contrast, people who are in close contact can understand mere hints which Tolstoy called “laconic and clear.” They can communicate and understand the most complex thoughts almost without using words” (Vygotsky, 1987 p. 269).

Vygotsky’s ideal speech situation is one where there is shared understanding and misunderstanding is minimised. Dialogue from this perspective is a cooperative process aimed towards ever greater agreement (Cheyne & Tarulli, 1999).

In my experience dialogue, as envisaged by Vygotsky, is particularly prevalent in today’s organisations. I assert that it has been accompanied by a reduction in the space for dissension in our conversations.

If from these readings I can begin to better understand how we create reality through our dialogue I can better develop my conceptual model of the dialogical continuum (Figure 4).
2.2.5 RESEARCH METHOD

I have battled against the force of mainstream qualitative and quantitative research methods and been battered, tossed and turned on my voyage. At one time I saw no escape from the darkening clouds of convention and compliance. To placate the academic authorities I included what I believed my reading audience wanted to see, an acceptable research method. I have left this attempt in the proposal, represented in smaller print type (I have edited the content to remove any references to any organisations, in line with my decision not to reference any of the organisations I have worked for). However with further readings, analysis and discussions with supervisors I have lifted anchor from this port of fear, and made sail into a headwind for a destination more in tune with my understanding of what is required to give meaning to my dialogical model and to create the ‘truth’ of what it is that causes an organisation to be, and to become.

Conventional qualitative research, in the form of a descriptive, exploratory case study (Hussey & Hussey, 1997; Yin, 1994) will be used to describe what Stacey refers to as the Propositional Themes organising our experience of being together (Stacey, 2003c). Such propositional themes are the conscious and legitimate formal themes that Strategic Choice Theory/Strategic Design focuses on and include plans, budgets, management information and control systems, visions, missions etc. The case study sits within the phenomenological paradigm. The unit of analysis is an organisation. Based on previous research by Byrne (Byrne, 2000, 2001a, 2001b; 2002) what has caused the organisation to be what it is and to become what it will be can be explained by mainstream thinking on strategy such as the Theory of Strategic Choice as elaborated by Stacey (Stacey, 2003c) and through the strategic design lens (Johnson & Scholes, 2002). Within Strategic Choice Theory/Strategic Design, Senior Management chooses the direction of the organisation and then designs an organisation structure to implement that direction. Organisational documentation will be analysed and further data will be collected from semi-formal interviews with Senior Management. In previous studies carried out by Byrne (Byrne, 2000, 2001a, 2001b; 2002) the organisation was found to be a ‘defender’ type organisation where business strategy is primarily associated with incremental organisational change, and with a consultative or directive style of change leadership (Miles & Snow, 1978). The organisation was also found to have a predominantly hierarchical structure and was termed a machine bureaucracy (Stace & Dunphy, 1998). In a study looking at conflict and its role in decision making Byrne (2000) found that conflict within the organisation was to be avoided, and was seen as a negative for decision making. This impacts on diversity.

It is believed that this organisation will offer an excellent contrast in comparing the way we understand organisations conventionally, through for example Strategic Choice Theory/Strategic Design and how we might better understand organisations through the Complex Responsive Process of Relating Theory. Due to the legitimate nature of the information being collected and its availability to all staff, no ethical complications are envisaged. Interviews will be taped, transcribed and signed off, prior to use, with each interviewee. Each interviewee will be made aware of the study and what use will be made of the information they provide.

And so towards my preferred destination, where I feel there is more consistency with my management philosophy perspective and the proposed research.

As a skilled investment, finance and computing practitioner I am comfortable with statistical analysis and quantitative research methods and have had occasion to use them whilst completing research projects undertaken whilst an MBA student.

However in the early stages of my research proposal I was drawn towards qualitative research methods that pushed the boundaries of validity within academic institutions. For many months I struggled to accommodate more ‘acceptable/mainstream’ research methodologies, but they simply did not resonate with how I wanted to proceed on my
expedition. The discovery of my management-philosophy-self and the freedom of thought I wanted to express felt that it would be contained by mainstream quantitative and qualitative research methods. I want to be unrestrained in the progression and development of my own thinking so that I might arrive at an understanding in which others can share and relate.

Following in-depth dialogue with my supervisors and others at Edith Cowan University, and my own enquiry into alternate research methods I acquired the confidence and courage to follow a research path that felt right for me. In search of discovering understanding my intention is to use (postmodern) heuristic research (Moustakas, 1990; Williams, 2004) and autoethnography/reflexivity (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Stacey & Griffin, 2005). This study concerns my voyage in making sense of that part of my life dedicated to work. Along the way my intention is to further my understanding by bringing several of my work colleagues on board and entering into dialogue with them, and have them reflect on their experiences at work. This voyage may never have a destination, but perhaps you will begin to see and understand organisations in a different way and will relate to my travel experience.

2.2.5.1 HEURISTIC RESEARCH

The following account of heuristic research comes from Moustakas (1990). The word heuristic comes from the Greek word heuriskein meaning to discover or to find. It is linked to the word eureka and for me this means sudden insight, which I term heuristic insights. I propose to populate my thesis with personal insights gained whilst on my voyage of discovery.

“The self of the researcher is present throughout the process and, while understanding the phenomenon with increasing depth, the researcher also experiences growing self-awareness and self-knowledge. Heuristic processes incorporate creative self-processes and self-discoveries” (Moustakas, 1990 p. 9).

With heuristic research, unlike phenomenological studies, the researcher must have a “direct, personal encounter with the phenomenon being investigated” (Moustakas, 1990 p. 14). I worked for the same organisation for fifteen years. On my heuristic voyage there exists the potential for personal transformation. Utilising self-dialogue “one faces oneself and must be honest with oneself and one’s experience relevant to the question or problem” (Moustakas, 1990 p. 17). This introduces elements of reflexivity and the telling of a personal story (narrative).

I remain unconvinced of the concept of ‘self-dialogue’. My belief is that you cannot have a conversation with yourself as to do so involves a voice other than your own. I currently favour the concept of language running through your head (Cupitt, 2001).

What I want to understand is what causes an organisation to be what it is and to become what it will be. The experiences of myself and of those who interact with me is an integral part of understanding the reality we have created through our interaction in language, as is an understanding of the official ideology espoused in documentation and the language of senior management which sets the context.

“Only the experiencing persons...can validly provide portrayals of the experience. If one is to know and understand another’s experience, one must converse directly with the person. One must encourage the other to express,
explore, and explicate the meanings that are within his or her experience. One must create an atmosphere of openness and trust, and a connection with the other that will inspire that person to share his or her experience in unqualified, free, and unrestrained disclosures” (Moustakas, 1990 p. 26).

This goes to the heart of what I currently believe causes organisations to be and to become – dialogue. My thinking is that we each play roles within an organisation and that role is suited to particular forms of dialogue. If you don’t follow the legitimate ideology, if you don’t speak the correct language, you may find yourself excluded and engaging in some form of active or passive subversion. I hope to illuminate this understanding through open and honest dialogue with several of my work colleagues.

2.2.5.1.1 VALIDITY OF HEURISTIC RESEARCH

The main question with this type of research is validity. “The question of validity is one of meaning” (Moustakas, 1990 p. 32). That judgement is mine. This is a personal voyage where the proposed destination is to understand what causes my organisation to be and to become. Nobody can critique my experiences or those with whom I work. We share our own unique reality. The validity is whether you can relate to what you are reading and can gain insight into your own experiences by relating to mine and others. I am not trying to uncover some hidden truth, as a postmodern pragmatist I seek to create the truth, not find it. What I understand will be a local phenomenon. Whether it carries any universality depends on your interpretation. Of course my work colleagues, who participate, will have the opportunity to validate their own narrated experiences. Having reflected upon their contribution, which will remain unpublished, I will give my own voice to their experiences, thereby ensuring their anonymity.

2.2.5.1.2 POSTMODERN HEURISTIC INQUIRY

Heuristic inquiry emphasises connectedness and relationship, whilst phenomenology requires a kind of detachment from whatever is being investigated. Heuristic inquiry therefore excludes the Cartesian dualism of object-subject, with which I am uncomfortable. Such dualistic thinking presents itself where management see themselves as independent of the organisation they are controlling. It implies an objective truth, and a scientific approach towards a known reality. This is a realist proposition and as an anti-realist, believing there is no objective reality and that all reality is constructed through our interaction through language and that there is no truth to be found, heuristic inquiry makes more sense. To ensure no contradiction with this outlook I will use the research term postmodern heuristic inquiry (Williams, 2004).

2.2.5.2 REFLEXIVITY/AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

Complementing postmodern heuristic inquiry and informing my writing style is autoethnography or reflexivity. The narrative as a research method is reflexive as the narrator makes explicit the way of thinking that they are reflecting in the construction of the story. This form of research is an interpretation and a subjective reflection on personal experience, however it presents an account of what people actually experience in their organisational interactions with all the related uncertainties and emotions. Crucial to the interpretative process is an exploration of my past experience and how it
has shaped this study (Stacey & Griffin, 2005). The researcher must take their own experience of social interaction seriously and try to understand the nature of that experience in which their identities are under perpetual construction.

### 2.2.5.2.1 AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

Ellis and Bochner (2000) refer to Autoethnography in the Handbook of Qualitative Research. This discipline seeks to make the researcher’s own experience a topic of investigation in it’s own right, and therefore supports the approach taken by Stacey and Griffin (2005). Autoethnography includes research approaches such as personal narratives, reflexive ethnography and narrative ethnography. In describing reflexive ethnographies Ellis and Bochner state

“Although reflexive ethnographies primarily focus on a culture or subculture, authors use their own experience in the culture reflexively to bend back on self and look more deeply at self-other interactions” and also “In reflexive ethnographies the researcher’s personal experience becomes important primarily in how it illuminates the culture under study” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000 p. 740).

In essence Autoethnography seeks to provoke readers, to make them reflect critically on their own experience and increase their understanding of that experience.

“Invited to take the story in and use it for themselves, readers become co performers, examining themselves through the evocative power of the narrative text”. (Ellis & Bochner, 2000 p. 748).

### 2.2.5.2.2 ETHICAL QUESTIONS OF AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

There are ethical questions raised by self-reflexive narrative research. Firstly there is the matter of writing about the people you are interacting with. It seems the best you can do is to inform them generally about what you are doing and not reveal their identities whilst presenting a reliable account of what is going on. To protect the organisation I work for, the people I work with and myself I will position this study in a different country and deliberately fictionalise the type of organisation and the people therein. It will be my ethical responsibility to be caring and nurturing to all involved in the research including myself (Williams, 1996). The resultant work however will be no less valid as the fictionalisation will merely create a mirror context which reflects my thoughts and experience as well as those I converse with. What I am primarily dealing with is cooperative interaction between people within a particular context. That context can be disguised but re-created elsewhere.

What I am attempting to convey is that there is a way of talking between ourselves that privileges either an official or unofficial ideology and causes us to become what we are and will be. I am not seeking to lay blame with anybody; rather I merely wish to understand my experience at work. Each co-participant I ask to reflect on their experience will have full editing rights on their contribution in the knowledge that I am not seeking to quote them or directly reference their contribution, but rather to reflect on their reflection giving my own voice to their experience and seeking heuristic insight from it. Their contribution will assist in the development of my understanding of what has caused the organisation to be what it is, and to become what it will be.
2.2.5.2.3 VALIDITY OF AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

As with heuristic inquiry there is the issue of validity. Stacey and Griffin state that “there can be no objective validity since the research is an interpretation, a subjective reflection on personal experience”. The research must “…make sense to others, resonate with the experience of others and be persuasive to them”. (Stacey & Griffin, 2005).

An exploration of my past experiences will establish a context for the study.

Ellis and Bochner state that “the work seeks verisimilitude: it evokes in readers a feeling that the experience described is lifelike, believable, and possible” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000 p. 751). On this basis the legitimate validity of the research, as with heuristic inquiry, will be how well others relate to it. If the research helps the reader to better understand the nature of human interaction, what an organisation is and how organisational identity emerges, it has validity. Increasing understanding is valuable. This type of research “…presents accounts of what people actually experience in their organisational practice with all its uncertainty, emotion and messiness, rather than highly rational accounts and their hindsight view”. (Stacey & Griffin, 2005).

Autoethnography allows me to discover my authorial voice and to tell my story of discovery.

“A text that functions as an agent of self-discovery or self-creation, for the author as well as for those who read and engage the text, is only threatening under a narrow definition of social inquiry, one that eschews a social science with a moral centre and heart. Why should caring and empathy be secondary to controlling and knowing? Why must academics be conditioned to believe that a text is important only to the extent it moves beyond the merely personal? We need to question our assumptions, the metarules that govern the institutional workings of social science – arguments over feelings, theories over stories, abstractions over concrete events, sophisticated jargon over accessible prose” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000 p.746).

Like Bochner I believe that reflexivity has validity in the postmodern era. As an anti-realist I believe there is no reality independent of mind, and from a neo-pragmatic perspective that all truths are contingent on the describing activities of human beings (Rorty, 1989). No researcher can detach themselves from what is being researched, they are a part of it. So why not write more directly from the source of our own experience? (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). I particularly relate to this passage from a presentation given by Bochner when answering a question on postmodernism and reflexivity;

“…In the writings of certain postmodernists and particularly within feminist and queer theory you see a renewed appreciation for emotion, intuition, personal experience, embodiment, and spirituality. They’ve helped us cross some of
the boundaries separating the arts and the sciences and to focus attention on diversity and difference instead of unity and similarity…it’s important to get exposed to local stories that bring us into worlds of experience that are unknown to us, show us the concrete daily details of people whose lives have been underrepresented or not represented at all, help us reduce their marginalisation, show us how partial and situated our understanding of the world is. Maybe that’s depressing to some of you, but I think it’s enlightening and possibly transforming” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000 pp. 747-748).

In trying to gain an understanding of why organisations are the way they are it includes writing about the experiences of those that do not follow the official ideology and who potentially are marginalised. From a pragmatic viewpoint the usefulness of narrating such experiences “…rises or falls on its capacity to provoke readers to broaden their horizons, reflect critically on their own experience, enter empathically into worlds of experience different from their own, and actively engage in dialogue regarding the social and moral implications of the different perspectives and standpoints encountered” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000 pp. 747-748).

If I can achieve that with this study I will be happy.

2.2.5.3 SUMMING UP

Postmodern heuristic inquiry and reflexivity are very closely aligned. Both complement an anti-realist perspective where there is no objective reality and where reality is created continuously through our daily interactions through language. Both will provide me with the intellectual freedom to discover a new understanding of my workplace and to narratively flow with the joy of such discovery.
2.2.6 RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

2.2.6.1 TO ME

The account of the research significance below was written when I was very much in awe of Stacey and my overwhelming focus was to be true to his theory of complex responsive processes of relating, without diluting his methodology. I also included the case study (smaller type font), a more traditional research methodology, to disguise the more radical approach I favoured. However this study is also about my development as a management philosopher and human being. I am discovering my own authorial voice, my own style of lyric writing, and my own understanding of what causes the organisation I work in to be what it is and what it will become. I want to continue the development of my conceptual model of dialogue throughout this voyage. So for me, personally, this research is extremely significant. It is this self-development that I carry with me in my daily interaction with others, through language.

Perhaps this can be the precursor for real change in society. Rather than a collection of PhD dissertations which remain unpublished, influencing the thought of a few, the real significance may be in the interaction of those PhD authors in society and what their voyage has brought to their thinking which they now share with others, leaving nobody unmoved by the interactive experience.

I offer this passage from the Sea of Cortez as a metaphor to illuminate the point:

“Let’s see what we see, record what we find, and not only fool ourselves with conventional scientific strictures – in that lonely and uninhabited Gulf our boat and ourselves would change it the moment we entered. By going there, we would bring a new factor to the Gulf. Let us consider that factor and not be betrayed by this myth of permanent objective reality. If it exists at all it is only available in pickled tatters or in distorted flashes. “Let us go,” we said, “into the Sea of Cortez, realising that we become forever a part of it; that our rubber boots slogging through a flat of eelgrass, that the rocks we turn over in a tide pool, make us truly and permanently a factor in the ecology of the region. We shall take something away from it, but we shall leave something too” (Steinbeck & Ricketts, 1941 p. 3).

2.2.6.2 TO THE READER

The significance to readers is that you and they will be able to relate to my account of my development and thereby gain insight into your own. Perhaps if more people took their own experience more seriously and questioned what is around them and within them we would all benefit from the interaction in language, and be changed for the better. This form of heuristic, reflexive research liberates my thinking, allowing me to explore with great freedom areas which interest me, and which, I am certain, will interest you. If others feel the same the significance of this study will be that perhaps they too will commence on their own voyages of discovery without being fearful of not pursuing a more object-subject type of research where the researcher is on the outside looking in, and which quantum physics tell us will invalidate the results anyway as the researcher impacts on what is being researched. The more people that take up this type
of research, the more likely it is that century old thinking will be questioned, people will seek greater academic freedoms and perhaps great thinkers will populate the planet again.

2.2.6.3 TO OTHERS

For my voyage to have an outcome, apart from my self development and the development in understanding of my readers, it will be in the form of my conceptual dialogical model which I believe will assist in our understanding of what causes organisations to be what they are and to become what they will be. This model will have a universal acceptance amongst people in organisations and is original in its construction. The commencement of its development is outlined below. Before I describe this model in more detail, I once again return to my original script where I was focused on contributing to the work of Professor Stacey and his theory of complex responsive processes of relating. Though I have further developed my thought since writing these passages, gaining heuristic insights on my expedition, I remain convinced of the significance of reflexive/autoethnographic research though not necessarily in the context of the theory of complex responsive processes of relating. As I will not be undertaking the case study, reference to this research is highlighted by a smaller text font.

2.2.6.4 CONTRIBUTING TO THE THEORY OF COMPLEX RESPONSIVE PROCESSES OF RELATING

The significance of this study is that it seeks to add to the work of Professor Ralph Stacey in challenging the underlying assumptions of mainstream organisational theory by contemplating an alternative understanding of what an organisation is and how it becomes. By focusing on how things actually get done in organisations, rather than on what should be done this research will contribute Professor Stacey's questioning of conventional management thinking, where management strategies and actions are responsible for what an organisation is and becomes, with non-management staff merely playing a part in the organisational system and being motivated to do so by various management techniques.

What is original is that the theory of complex responsive processes of relating does not seek to provide a prescription for management, rather it seeks to re-focus management attention on the ordinary; how ordinary people act in their ordinary local interaction in the living present. Strategy or organisational identity emerges through ordinary conversation. The organisation is the process of communicative interaction and power relating between people. This is how things really work within the organisation. There has only been limited work carried out in this area primarily by Professor Ralph Stacey and his colleagues in the United Kingdom (Fonseca, 2002; D. Griffin, 2002; Shaw, 2002; Stacey, 2003c; Streatfield, 2001). This is certainly the first time this way of understanding an organisation will be explored in Western Australia.

A conventional research method of exploratory case study, sitting in the phenomenological paradigm, will be utilised to study management strategies within a Government organisation and to examine the intention of management in making the organisation what it is.
Following this senior management account of how the organisation should be and what it should become, within the framework of complex responsive processes of relating the researcher will through self-reflexive narrative explore how these strategies/intentions are experienced through interaction with other staff and explore what causes the organisation to becomes what it is and what it will be. By so doing the researcher seeks to contribute to the small body of knowledge world wide seeking to increase management understanding of the value of re-focusing their attentions to what is happening around them and to appreciate the importance of ordinary everyday communicative interaction and power relating between people in the living present, in an organisation becoming what it becomes.

This study is important because it adds to the current body of work on the theory of complex responsive processes of relating, which offers an alternative to the mainstream view of organisations as systems, with formative and rationalist causality. This theory questions the long held assumptions of readily accepted conventional strategic management theories. The theory questions the primacy of the individual whilst highlighting the importance of social interaction between people. Too often people in management fail to question the underlying assumptions in what they are being thought, instead passively accepting what they are being told, because it is widely accepted, legitimate and safe. This study wishes to provoke conversation, and lead to questioning of conventional management practice.

2.2.6.5 RE-FOCUSDING MANAGEMENT ATTENTION

The conventional research proposed under this study will allow a comparison to be made between management intention and how that intention is actually experienced in making the organisation what it is.

The form of research proposed in understanding the experience of the researcher is self-reflexive narrative and is currently being carried out at the University of Hertfordshire under the guidance of Professor Ralph Stacey. The theory of complex responsive processes of relating, however, remains in its infancy, particularly as mainstream thinking demands application of proven research methodologies with hypothesis and some outcome which is applicable. The research proposed within this study does not lend itself to application, nor will it prescribe something which can be used by managers. Rather it seeks to increase understanding of what already exists, and will do so by encouraging management to re-focus their attentions on how things really get done around the organisation. Through this re-focus and increased understanding perhaps management will begin to take seriously human interaction, their participation within it, and what is required to provide for free flow of conversation. It is through such human interaction that strategic direction evolves.

The first hypothesis is related to the initial research to be carried out on a public body. I expect to find that the way the organisation is and what it becomes is understood as being caused by senior management intention and design.

The second hypothesis challenges the first hypothesis and states that the way an organisation is and what it becomes is understood as being caused by the local communicative interaction between people in the living present.
This study will seek to move the reader from the easily understood first hypothesis to the less conventional second hypothesis.

It is not the purpose of this study to privilege one over the other, but to merely seek to question mainstream thinking and offer a different perspective, there can be no findings as such. The less conventional research will convey the everyday experiences of the researcher where such experiences are taken seriously and analysed within the framework of the theory of complex responsive processes of relating. The study can however be used to highlight just how organisations become the way they are and how management can re-focus their attention on their participation and interaction with other people, what affects that interaction and how the quality of that interaction can be improved. By questioning mainstream thinking this study may also get management questioning the way in which corporate programmes are implemented to change organisations, and whether with the knowledge gained from the complex responsive process of relating, such programmes are capable of changing the organisation.

2.2.6.6 GENERATING UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN AGENCY

This study seeks to explore the emergence of organisational identity/strategy through human interaction in the form of ordinary every-day conversation. The framework provided by the theory of complex responsive processes of relating allows the researcher to make sense of their own identity and the collective identity of those within the organisation through self-reflexive narrative. By examining the themes and patterns emerging through this narrative it is expected that a picture will present which will increase the understanding of why the organisation is the way it is, and how it will become what it will be, despite management programmes and policies and procedures. It is also expected to provide a more meaningful description of human action within organisations. Human agency means humans doing something and is concerned with what causes humans to do what they do. Through this study I expect to increase the understanding that human agency is not located in either the individual or the social, nor in both the individual and the social because it is not an ‘it’. Human agency is the process of interaction between people.

I now recognise that this would be extremely difficult to do.

2.2.6.7 HIGHLIGHTING THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PROCESS OF HUMAN INTERACTION

As a manager I have been taught to set goals, set measures and motivate staff towards their achievement. This has been with a framework of a vision, with supporting mission statements and corporate wide objectives, the idea being that everything is interlinked to one direction. Staff merely carried out instructions, and subordinated their free will to the management of the organisation. I felt and continue to feel uncomfortable with this ideology. I have certainly practiced scientific management as it is expected, however treating adults like children, and manipulating them towards some goal, I find unethical. How refreshing then to find a theory that questions this mainstream type of thinking and suggests that it is through our interaction with each other that the organisation becomes what it is, and that this interaction with each other is primarily through vocal communication which is self-organising and therefore cannot be controlled or
manipulated by management as they cannot stand outside of the process, as the process is not an ‘it’.

If one accepts the theory of complex responsive processes of relating then it is acknowledged that meaning and change in organisations results from transformation in our communicative interaction with each other. This has far reaching consequences for many corporate programmes and the way in which management focus their attentions, and question their own participation with staff. It also brings to light the importance of local conversations in the living present, and the idea of paradox which cannot be resolved only continually rearranged.

Even today the continual acceptance of the power of management and their ability to design systems towards a given end, control them and set actions towards a given goal is unquestioned. I believe this is a problem, and leads to much misunderstanding of what causes an organisation to be what it is, and underestimates the importance of human interaction whilst overstating the tools of that interaction, such as reports, analysis tools, information technology etc (the propositional themes that organise our experience of being together). The organisation is viewed as a system, something which management can design and control. Within this context human interaction is another system which can be encouraged and made benefit the organisation. From this perspective the organisation is reified. It is given its own reality and becomes an it. This is one way of understanding organisations, but management should not close their eyes to alternatives.

This study seeks to offer the alternative point of view and question mainstream thinking.

2.2.6.8 UNDERLINING THE VALUE OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIP IN TRANSFORMING HUMAN IDENTITIES

Without diversity in thinking nothing will be gained in the advancement of our knowledge and our understanding of ourselves and the institutions we form. Few organisational studies actually seek to understand how the organisation works in the living present and even fewer welcome the idea that the research is not scientifically based and presenting something that management can use. Perhaps questioning fundamentally held beliefs causes anxiety as it threatens the identity of management and how they see themselves. Rationalist and formative teleologies have for too long privileged the manager as the main instigator of organisational success. Transformative teleology seeks to advance our understanding that human interaction is perpetually constructing human identity as continuity and potential transformation at the same time. “Organisation is evolving identity…Strategy is the evolving pattern of organisational identity” (Stacey, 2003c p. 390)

This research seek to pose the question, how do we understand what causes organisations to be what they are, and to become what they will be. The purpose of the study is to increase understanding of organisations by contrasting mainstream thinking on organisations and how senior management have made the organisation what it is, and the experience of the researcher who through self-reflexive narrative will relate another way of thinking about how organisational identity emerges. The researcher has fifteen years working experience within the organisation being focused upon.
Organisational identity (strategy) emerges from conversation in the living present. The theory of complex responsive processes of relating states that organisational identity is an evolutionary process of communicative interaction which is self-organising. Therefore the research cannot be directed towards the answer to the question posed. Instead the research seeks to add to the understanding of human identity as an evolving process which can result in the continuity or transformation of organisations.

The main value of this type of research is that it sets out what people actually experience in their day-to-day working lives with all the associated uncertainty, emotion and messiness. The path the research will follow is unknown and therefore there is no relationship between variables as to include them would be enforcing the idea that human agency is governed by formative and rationalist teleologies. The theory of complex responsive processes of relating puts forward transformative teleology where the future is under perpetual construction. It is the relationships between people that are the transformative cause of individual and collective identities. Relationship is continuously recreating identities with the potential for transforming them. What the organisation becomes emerges from the relationships of the staff, and their need, both individually and collectively to express their identities and thereby their differences. Self-organising interaction is the transformative cause of emerging change within organisations, and cannot be directed or controlled.

The purpose of such research, according to Stacey & Griffin (2005) is not to solve a problem or make an improvement to the organisation but to get management to pay attention to the local conversational interactions they are engaged in because it is from these that wider organisational patterns emerge.
2.2.6.9 SUMMING UP

I continue to agree with much of the preceding accounts of research significance and the research question. However I have moved on. When I finally hoisted the main sail on my voyage of discovery, there was no planned destination, instead I am responding to the winds of understanding that fill my sails. In the course of this expedition there begun to emerge a conceptual model which I describe as a dialogical continuum. This model has become my compass, with which I circumnavigate the seas of thought. It has emerged as the focus of my reflection, representing my lived experience in interaction with others, in the context of a work environment.

This conceptual model will continue to be developed throughout my voyage, what it will end up representing is at this time unknown. Here is the most recent version of my conceptual model of a dialogic continuum, my compass:

![Diagram](image)

Figure 4: Tentative conceptual model of thesis development. This model allows for the emergence of new themes and issues (implicit in interpretative research) as I continue my voyage of discovery.

This model logs my voyage to date and includes areas I can see on the horizon, which will require exploration and reflection.

The dialogic continuum ranges from a magistral dialogue, such as that of slave/master to a democratic dialogue which represents the liberation of the slave in dialogic
participation. This continuum is informed by the work of several philosophers including; Socrates, Bakhtin, Vygotsky, Habermas, Gadamer, Wittgenstein and Stacey. Their views on dialogue are summarised in the literature review, though the thoughts of Stacey, who was the inspiration for the anchor being lifted, are included in more detail.

The concept is that as you move along the dialogical continuum toward democratic dialogue, power relations are enabled and the official ideology is subverted, leading to a fundamental individual/collective identity change within the work context. Movement along the dialogical continuum is actioned by the roles we each play, that being the initiator of identity change. Power relations are recognised as being extremely important in how we interact (through language).

This study promotes heuristic/reflexive research as a legitimate and necessary contributor to human understanding of humans. There is no object-subject distinction, I am both.
2.3 E-MAILS 29TH JULY 2005 – 8TH SEPTEMBER 2005

And so having delivered my research proposal I move towards the next stage, the research presentation, whilst continuing my thought development.

From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Friday, 29 July 2005 14:19
To: s.gardner'; 'p.johansen'; 'm.williams'
Subject: Reflective actor

Gentlemen,

Had some interesting conversations at ECU this morning which prompted some insights and calls to practice.

I met with Phil Dobson, a critical realist, and he started me thinking about actualising some of what we have been discussing – to in a sense make it real.

This got me thinking about practice and my reflections upon it. My insight is that practice is role playing and that by reflecting on practice you are reflecting on your role playing. Reflective practitioner would then be a reflective role player or my preferred phrase - a reflective actor (this is more multi-dimensional and representative of the different roles we each play). So in effect I am a reflective actor.

Regarding dialogue:

The context: An ECU study room with students from different cultural backgrounds
The issue: Getting the students to engage in a form of open dialogue and emotionally engage with each other

Suggestion: Find out the different nationalities present. Ask them to talk about their culture – what they like about it, dislike, how it compares to Australian culture. Then throw it open to questions. The key is how you facilitate this. Only questions which seek to further develop deeper understanding of the subject should be allowed – this will involve careful framing of the question. Any questions which seek to present the position of the person asking the question should be stopped and analysed to highlight the defensive nature of such a position. Ultimately this is a more ethical position as it privileges understanding by all, with an openness to discovery of information from the presenter. If you decide to experiment with this (probably at the beginning of a semester) I would be very interested in attending or being advised of the outcome. It has relevance to dialogue from an action perspective.

Kind Regards,
Alan Byrne
Reflective Actor.
From: Mark WILLIAMS  
Sent: Tuesday, 2 August 2005 12:31  
To: Byrne, Alan

Subject: RE: Graduate Business Students Association

Now this really is subversive!

Warm regards, Mark

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In our Doctoral Colloquium we had talked at length over a period of time about the slave/master relationship and the subversion of official ideologies. This has particular appeal for anyone feeling marginalised as it is about bringing about change. My belief is that it is through free dialogue that the potential for change is present. To be free means not to be afraid to say what you think in a way respectful of all present. I feel we have free dialogue in our colloquium, and that can transform our thinking and subsequent actions.

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From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Tue 2/08/2005 6:22 AM  
To: Jen BRIDGER  
Cc: Mark WILLIAMS  
Subject: RE: Graduate Business Students Association

Hi Jen,

I would like to remain active. I am currently trying to get speakers for a debate on whether philosophy should be included as a core unit in the MBA programme. Hopefully this will be of interest to the higher degree students. I believe a sloping lecture theatre would be preferable, and we would need a high profile facilitator.

A mix of academics and administrators would be good - and potentially I would like to have a decision maker there to listen to the argument.

Regards,

Alan.

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Here I am carrying out a political wish, to have philosophy included in the MBA programme. As a member of the Graduate Business Students Association I believed I could organise a meaningful debate. As it turned out it never happened. I did not have the commitment to fight other members to make it happen. If they had received my suggestion with some degree of enthusiasm it would have made a difference. But I had other priorities to attend to; namely getting through my research proposal.
From: Mark WILLIAMS  
Sent: Wednesday, 3 August 2005 16:51  
To: Mark WILLIAMS; Scott GARDNER; Byrne, Alan ; Paul  
Subject: RE: Thursday Doctoral colloquium  

Dear Researchers of all colours

Our normal Thursday meeting is on at 3.30 pm in my room - all welcome including guests. We will be working on Alan's ideas so as to explore the philosophical foundations of Management and MIS for the big public debate between the leading thinkers in the Management and MIS Schools.

Note that we meet at 3.30pm tomorrow.

Warm regards, Mark

From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Monday, 8 August 2005 09:10  
To: 'Mark WILLIAMS'; Scott GARDNER; and others  
Subject: RE: Thursday Doctoral colloquium  
Attachments: RE: Thursday Doctoral colloquium

Some thoughts (language) for your digestion.

Following our colloquium on Thursday, the following thought occurred to me whilst walking the dog that evening.

If you accept that reality is a social construction, occasioned by our interaction with each other through language, then it follows that the master/slave relationship is also socially constructed through language.

If you further accept that not only do we interact with each other through language, but that simultaneously we have language running through our heads, then our reality is a consequence of both, at the same time. So our reality depends on the language we use, and our vocabulary, which is how we think.

Given that, then the master/slave relationship should be capable of change by redescription. Through redescribing our position as a slave, we can change that reality FOR US, and achieve a degree of freedom of thought. This attainment may be represented by greater awareness of our interactions and the language used, so that these interactions can be redescribed, creating a new role for ourselves and obtaining a brightness – a freedom in our thinking (language – lyric poetry: Describing the indescribable).

The argument is of course that the master/slave relationship remains. For example no matter what type of reality I create, my boss retains his power. My point is though, that by redescribing this relationship you can overcome the power of the master – in the language you use. In this sense the philosophy is a coping mechanism. Language can
be used to enslave you; to make you feel like a slave. Typical are hierarchies in organisations where you get to ‘know your place’. To break free of these language boundaries you must ‘think’ of them in a different way – increase your understanding and your vocabulary, which will allow you to redescribe your role and perhaps begin to democratise that master/slave construction.

The following quote is from Laurel Richardson, in the Handbook of Qualitative Research – ‘Writing: A method of Inquiry’ p.929

“What something means to individuals is dependent on the discourses available to them. For example being hit by one’s spouse is differently experienced if it is thought of within the discourse of “normal marriage,”, “husbands’ right,” or “wife battering,” an illegitimate use of power that should not be tolerated”

Alan

From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Monday, 15 August 2005 12:00  
To: ‘s.gardner’; ‘m.williams’; ‘p.johansen’  
Subject: More thoughts on thoughts

I have been discussing some of the philosophical thinking raised in the past weeks, with my wife Ana. Ana keeps my thinking grounded and is very insightful in her questioning, leading me to question the pragmatism of what I am espousing.

I am beginning to question if the slave can change their own reality by how they describe it through language – after all they will unlikely change the power base of the master. What they may be able to do is change the reality of those around them, which may in turn lead to a change in their own reality as the language of those around them change. It seems too simplistic to suggest that someone can change their reality by changing their language, however it makes more sense that you can change the reality of those around you by doing so, and in so doing they may change yours.

I guess this goes to the social construction of reality and is a reason you cannot change it by yourself, as to do so involves a specific intent, utilising language as a means to an end. As a social process you cannot guarantee where it will end up, as the process is self-organising.

Redescription in this sense is allowing others ‘to see’ what they are not already seeing (seeing is language based – you translate everything you see into language).

So where does the freedom come from in redescription? Does it actually change the power relations? I don’t think so. What it does is create some form of subversion – the subversion of those power relations which may at some point be significant enough to alter the power relations and weaken the position of the master, and strengthen that of the slave.

This emphasis is on the slave – what of the master? Being in the dominant position, will they give it up, have it diluted, or merely create a reality which purports to democratise the position of the slave?
My thinking here is very much in line with a pragmatic view on philosophy, and my own research. If you can’t relate to it, if it does not resonate with you, if it does not persuade you, then it lacks validity – it’s of no use.

Alan.

Of note here is the contribution made by my wife Ana. I discuss my thinking with my family, they are an integral part of my voyage of discovery. In particular Ana has a way of cutting to the chase and does not entertain fluffy, touchy feely type thinking readily. Ana demands from me, greater thought in any statements I make. This creates eureka moments. Ana keeps me grounded and forces insight through her bullshit piercing questions.

From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Monday, 15 August 2005 12:07
To: Byrne, Alan
Subject: FW: More thoughts on thoughts

It struck me after I sent this that what I am referring to is the use of language as a revolutionary force – to change the status quo, the official ideology (being the ideology of the master).

Alan Byrne

From: Mark WILLIAMS
Sent: Monday, 15 August 2005 16:14
To: Alan Byrne and others
Subject: Master or Slave or both?

Attachments: LWsignature050509.gif; Self-talk4.doc

Dear research colleagues and friends from all over the world

I hope this email finds you all well. From discussions at our weekly research colloquium arose the following email discussion regarding freedom and enslavement, master and slave, or both. I refer to the attached document containing two philosophical poems.

Warm regards, Mark.

Most people are still realists even 200 years after Kant. They really think that what they construct in the heads is the same as what is.

It seems that we are all subject to signals from haps that happen within what is. Thus it does seem that someone with cancer or someone living in an autocratic language domain (culture) is more enslaved that those of us in a relatively democratic culture.

Revolutions that initially promise freedom usually end up, at least for some time, delivering increased enslavement. In the end, I think that changing language is the best way to get a life.
What do you think of the following account? (PS Can I send your email and my response out to the rest of the group?)

All living things respond to
Sensations such as
The sights-sounds-smells-touch-tastes
That impact on us
Via our sense organs.

Sensations come to us
Via signals radiating
From haps that happen
Within what is
Within and around us.

I respond to such sensations by
Reflex responses (as do the animals)
And by associating them with
Sounds, signs, words and gestures -
The building blocks of language.

Through language
Running in my head,
I construct worlds
(Present, past, and future)
In my head.

Through language
Running in our heads
By means of communication,
We co-construct worlds,
In our heads.

Some sounds, signs, words, & gestures
I associate with what
I name freedom;
Others with enslavement;
Others with equinimity.

I increase the probability
Of freedom in my worlds
If I concentrate on
The sounds, signs, words, & gestures
That I associate with freedom.

When I come across haps
That I associate with
enslavement, pain, or suffering
I can do one or more
Of the following list.

1. Ignore them;
2. Flee from them;
3. Endure them;
4. Be mindful yet detached;
5. Change them if I can and choose to.

In all five strategies above
I think it best
To increase awareness of language
Running in my own and our heads
And through communication.

Such communication
Increases the probabilities
That using any of the strategies
Increases the awareness
Of freedom happening.

Regards, Mark

Alan Reply to Mark

Of course you can send out the e-mails.

I had a read of your poem – as usual very insightful and a good summary of your current thinking. The idea of freedom is interesting, especially how each of us makes sense of that word. I note from your thoughts that you seem to associate freedom as freedom from ‘enslavement, pain and suffering’ – all are perhaps part of the human condition and therefore part of life. I guess the point I am coming to in my thinking, through some provocation, is that we need to be careful not to think we can use language to achieve an end – for example escape from enslavement, for to do so would deny the self-organisation inherent in our communication with each other.

Revolution through language, does not seek to vanquish the other party, nor participate in a bloodied battle. Rather we seek, through understanding, to create a new synthesis, one that will benefit all parties. That this may initially undermine/subvert the official ideology is where the revolution is conceived, giving birth when the official ideology is changed – hopefully for the better as with self-organisation you can never be sure.

Regards,

Alan.
Re: proposal presentation
From: Scott Gardner

Sent: Tuesday, 16 August 2005 14:37
To: Byrne, Alan
Cc: l.barratt_; p.johansen; p.jackson; m.williams
Subject: Re: proposal presentation

Hi Alan

Just to confirm your proposal presentation, Fri Aug 26, 10.00am - 11.30. room tbc at CH.

Llandis Barratt - Pugh and Paul Jackson have kindly agreed to be your reviewers with prof Bill Loudon on standby.

In order to promote your seminar could you please send through a 200 -300 word abstract to be included in the email notice to staff and other research students.

regards

Scott

From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Wednesday, 17 August 2005 08:21
To: s.gardner; 'p.johansen'; 'm.williams'
Subject: Abstract for presentation

Attachments: PresentationAbstract.doc

Gentlemen,

I have put together an ‘invitation’ to my research proposal presentation at 10am, August 26. It is attached for your perusal.

Regards,

Alan
From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Wednesday, 17 August 2005 14:52  
To: 'm.williams'  
Subject: Music  

Hi Mark,  

I came across this piece of music – Samuel Barber ‘Adagio for strings’. I challenge your heart not to rise when the music reaches its crescendo.  

Go to windows music player and type in the composers name – play it off the internet.  

Regards,  

Alan.

Re: Abstract for presentation  
From: Scott Gardner  
Sent: Thursday, 18 August 2005 14:29  
To: Byrne, Alan  
Cc: p.jackson; p.johansen; m.williams; l.barratt_pugh  
Subject: Re: Abstract for presentation  

Hi Alan  

Just to confirm that room 17.146 has been booked for 10.00 - 11.30 Friday Aug 26.  

Will put your abstract and invitation on the faculty circulation list.  

regards  

Scott

From: Mark WILLIAMS  
Sent: Monday, 29 August 2005 16:52  
To: Byrne, Alan; Scott GARDNER; Per JOHANSEN  
Subject: RE: Thoughts on thoughts  
Attachments: LWsignature050509.gif  

Great stuff Alan. Good to have you communicating again – In response to Alan’s e-mail same date, repeated in this reply, indicated by italics.  

Alan: Back at work today but only firing on two cylinders.  

Alan: Still I had time over the weekend to think some more about human interaction, reality etc and offer the following (as indicated before I will use these communications in my thesis):
Remember that you can use all past and present literature, including these email dialogues, if you write that part of your thesis in an autobiographical style that heuristically brings out the eureka discoveries chronologically arranged to tell the story of your intellectual journey.

Alan: Firstly on role playing. Up until now I have been making the assumption that individuals play different roles, reflected in the language they use, how they dress etc. However I have been ignoring the social construction of reality – the role can not be played with any certainty of outcome by the individual. What the individual does is make a gesture – one he/she expects will be received in a particular way – it may not be. The implication is that whatever the role you play you will only be OBSERVED by the other party as they choose to observe you.

Note that Cupitt states the formula that "through language the expression of the body becomes the cognition of the world" (Long-legged Fly, p. 52). The words that come out of our mouths are formed by the expression of the body around our vocal cords and lips as air flows out of our lungs thus creating sound waves in the air etc. This is just a specialized form of body language, as are the roles we play out. In general, all this, including the expression of patterns in our brains, forms the language by which we construct our worlds.

Alan: This idea of observation comes from the quantum world. The electron experiment where an electron is passed between a slit in a board with two slits. If only one slit is accessible the electron will appear as a particle to the researcher, if both slits are open it will appear as a wave – if the second slit is opened as the electron is passing through the other, the electron will appear as a wave at that time. Although the electron is both a wave and a particle, the observation by the researcher sees it as a wave or a particle. Until observation it had both probabilities. Another example is Shrodinger’s Cat. Here a cat is placed in a solid box which is closed by a lid. You cannot see inside the box. There is an electronic button attached. If you press the button there is a 50% chance the cat will receive either a poison or food. Once you press the button is the cat alive or dead? Up until you observe the inside of the box, the cat exists as probabilities. After observation it is alive or dead. Wheatly makes the point that people in organisations, in cubicles/offices are laden with potential and their fate is determined by the act of observation. The potentiality of someone is lost/disappears from view by the act of observation. How we observe somebody is how we describe them in our interactions, both to ourselves and to others. This creates a reality. This reality is self-organising. You cannot control how others will observe you, irrespective of the role you play. Their response will be a gesture back to you which will impact on that role. This needs more development, but the jump in thinking is that originally I believed that we choose to play different roles and therefore achieve different outcomes for ourselves. This thinking is realist. It denies the social construction of reality and the belief that life is a process of cooperative interaction between living beings – a process of relationship that creates multiple realities. In a quantum world nothing is independent of the relationships that occur. It is a world of process not things. Gary Zukav termed the phrase: Observers of the Dance. This brings me back to my earlier readings in neo-Darwinism, Symbiosis, evolutionary psychology, human co-operation and quantum physics. The link to my current readings and philosophical understandings is this: Co-operative interaction. Through relationship we create our realities. We form these relationships through language.
A wonderfully meandering, exploring type of authorial voice. I like your struggles with connecting quantum mechanical descriptive thinking with the area under consideration. (Did you see the film "What the Bleep"?) I suggest you use this voice when autobiographically revisiting her previous literature you were into. I want to read the autobiography of your reading way back to your early readings - use a heuristic approach.

Alan: And some more on RESEARCH:/ From Laurel Richardson – Handbook of Qualitative Research: In traditional research triangulation is a much vaunted method of establishing validity – this assumes there is an object which can be triangulated./ What if we were to CRYSTALLISE in recognition that there are far more than three sides from which to approach the world. With a crystal what you see depends on your angle of repose

Yes, crystallisation is much more appropriate to your thesis than triangulation. You need to expand this in your chronological autobiographical and heuristic account of the development of your research approach.

Alan: This is very much a work-in-progress. Do we, for example, observe people in particular ways initially due to some physiological process? What part does this play in the construction of our reality? / More questions than answers.

I would like you to collate all these emails into a continuos dialogical interaction. How about asking each of us individually in emails as to how we construct you acting out the roles of PhD candidate, previous course work student, etc. T’would be great to get an account of how your colleagues construct you playing our your management roles - try to do this in a email dialogue as this is much the easiest to cut and paste into a thesis chapter.

The following might be helpful:

In Cupitt’s recent books Emptiness and Brightness (2001) and Life, Life (2003), he makes distinctions between his key words of Be-ing, language and life. Simplifying his thesis perhaps too much, we humans construct the world around us by using language-conversation to put into words what our senses detect of Be-ing around us. As philosophy has known since Locke, Hume, and Kant, we can never know just what is Be-ing as we only have our five limited senses. We will never know the reality of what it is out there. I quote the following to use Cupitt’s words to describe Be-ing, Language, and life.

Pure unformed Be-ing, prior to language, cannot be talked about and may (following Heidegger) be written as Be-ing, 'under erasure' [cf. Derrida]). I compare it with ‘quantum fluctuations in the vacuum’ in our contemporary physics: there is no absolute nothingness, for even in the void at absolute zero there is still a trembling of possibility, as particles may pop into existence and out again. … It is what Kant calls ‘the manifold of intuition’ – white noise, crackles and splutters of sense-experience. (Cupitt, 2001, p. 93, 95)

By language I mean the dance of signs, the continuous process of symbolic exchange between people, the humming communication network of which the human life world consists. I mean also to invoke the vast strange and multi-dimensional world of
linguistic meaning and I am hyphenating meaning, like being, because meaning is a process too. (Cupitt, 2001, p. 123)

Say yes to Being, Yes to pure contingency, Yes to life, Yes to the life world as a self-producing, self-renewing work of art that forms in us and pours out of us … We all of us want to love life, to live life to the full, to trust it, to commit ourselves to it, and to make the most of it while it lasts. (Cupitt, 2003, p. 5)

Thus I take it that Cupitt would have us better our lives and the lives of those around us by joining in the language-conversations of words, cultural roles, and body language to create a more consciously bright world around us thus enabling us to "live life to the full".
Regards, Mark

This e-mail marks the beginning of my linking of earlier work in evolution and co-operation to the newer philosophical perspective.

From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Wednesday, 31 August 2005 09:24
To: 'Mark WILLIAMS'
Subject: RE: Thoughts on thoughts
Attachments: RE: Thoughts on thoughts

As always Mark, I appreciate your feedback and comments.

I am beginning to form a relationship between evolution and philosophy.

In thinking about reality, I ask about the reality of us the human being. It seems that anti-realism looks to a mind dependent reality – but how does the human being fit into the social construction of reality. If we believe that reality is socially constructed – then what about the people in our reality? Perhaps people, like everything else are merely recognisable patterns of interactions – the interactions in this case being interactions between bacteria, cells, neurons etc – all of which interact co-operatively for the pattern of a human being to emerge.

If reality is a series of recognisable patterns, then changes in the themes that organise our experience of being together can change the pattern – alter the reality.

The human being as a process of interactions between cells, bacteria, neurones etc – is therefore a walking parcel of relationships. If you assume that these relationships are self-organising, then by altering the relationships you can change the pattern – in which way you cannot be sure. This would have implications for gene therapy and the like which assume a linear relationship.

So this goes back to my readings on evolution, but now through a philosophical lens.

Alan.
Dear Colleague

Our doctoral colloquium tonight discussed the importance of creating our own lives, including acting out our cultural roles as managers in organisations, as works of art. David and Dennis - please treat the following as part of your Master thesis. Ed and Alan - perhaps as part of your doctoral theses.

Consider "Wittgenstein's beautiful incantation, 'Nothing is hidden'. Hidden entities (such as Freud's unconscious drives etc) of every sort are ghosts hungry for blood who want to suck the value out of life. They must be banished if the winged joy is to come into its own."

As Cupitt writes in the Long-Legged Fly: ... in all of Freud, and some of Nietzsche ... is assumed that prior to culture, human nature already has a permanent constitution of biological drives, sexual, aggressive, and so forth. Culture may in various ways harness or sublimate these drives, but it cannot alter them and is foolish if it attempts to do so. These doctrines we have already found reason to question. Human beings do not have a pre-cultural constitution that is both purely natural and intelligible. Our life drives take on intelligible form only within the sphere of culture, and the cultural formation, articulation and expression of them is through-and-through changeable. Sex and aggression as we know them, in the only way we can know them, are cultural formations. ...

The true master is the one who does not need a slave. The will-to-power is not struggle, and not competitive. It is a will to discriminate, to differentiate qualities and to create meaning. It is will to do one's own thing regardless, for when it is purely active and affirmative, it seeks no recognition and requires no defeated role. It is like Bonhoeffer's hilaritas, a joy that is independent of any extrinsic confirmation or criticism, and may therefore be called 'eternal life'. ...

But the message remains: the full acceptance of contingency is the highest form of the affirmation of life. It is eternal life.

Regards, Mark
Hi Scott,

Any news on the presentation - are we still OK for Sept 9?

Alan

Reply:

Re: Presentation
From: Scott Gardner
Sent: Friday, 2 September 2005 18:50
To: Byrne, Alan
Cc: p.johansen; m.williams
Subject: Re: Presentation

Hi Alan


I must try to claw back the time to read your material properly just in case we have to defend the ground next Friday. You too Per. Mark i know you are fully conversant

regards

Scott

You will note here that the original research presentation was scheduled for August 26. This was postponed due to my unavailability (I had the flu, after waiting all that time, could you believe it?) and rescheduled to September 9.
From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Monday, 5 September 2005 12:47  
To: s.gardner; 'p.johansen'; 'm.williams”  
Subject: Ramblings  

Gentlemen,

Following a discussion with Mark on Friday, I began to further clarify my thinking on interaction, though I am still awaiting the breakthrough which is emerging.

Through our interaction we create realities – language is the most significant form of human interaction. The realities created are LOCAL as is the interaction. However now throw in observation – how we describe our realities – our reality being what we observe, what we observe being described by us. Observation enables/constrains that which you observe. How you describe, through language, in your local interactions affects your reality and that of those around you. It can both enables realities that describe potential, and constrains them in limiting potential. This means that how we describe reality in our local interactions impacts on the reality we are creating.

The reality we create in our local interactions forms and are formed by our other local interactions – making such interactions have a global influence.

So, if for example, in our local interactions we describe a person outside that interaction, as ‘different’, the other people in that interaction may observe that person as ‘different’ – this becomes their reality and it will impact on their interaction with that person. How that person is observed can depend on how someone else describes them. This is more likely to occur in local interactions between people where the power relations are enabling – i.e. informal, high trust etc.

The result is that each and every local interaction, pre-dominantly through language, describes a reality – a reality which is observed, such observation being either constraining/enabling to the potential of being. Our identities are formed through such local interactions both individually and collectively.

Rorty speaks of re-description. In the context of observation, this can be seen as changing how/what we observe – and thereby changing our description of our reality.

In this way, no reality is a real reality. The ‘different’ person, may not be so ‘different’ – they are just described as different and marginalised. The ‘real’ reality is described by those with the power to do so – you either accept their description of reality, or create your own – if necessary within their concept of reality. In this context reality creation is a coping mechanism – through our local interactions, through language, we cope. Only those in power can create and impose their version of reality – the official ideology.

I realise now that I am interested in those within organisations that are marginalised, and how they describe their realities – how they cope. I am also interested in how they came to be excluded from the official reality. How they became to be observed as being on the margin. Acquiescence to the espoused reality can ensure longevity and lead to being observed/described by those in power, in a desirable way – however such interaction may dim the brightness of being of the acquiesce.
This constant battle between official/unofficial ideologies in our local interactions through language, is what changes people in organisations – what creates individual and collective identities. It is the informal and formal – different realities colliding, where each forms and is formed by the other and where the formal reality is pre- eminent due to that reality being created by those with the power, and the informal reality of those with power would also tend to support and enable the formal reality.

Organisations are merely recognisable patterns of local human interactions. These interactions create multiple realities and multiple observations which describe multiple realities.

See you on Friday.

Regards,

Alan.

*Here you can find emerging a much stronger sense of marginalisation and descriptions of reality as coping mechanisms.*

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From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Monday, 5 September 2005 15:56  
To: 's.gardner'; 'p.johansen'; 'm.williams'  
Subject: More on ramblings

Had to get this down on e-mail.

Following my thoughts this morning, I had a ‘eureka’ moment this afternoon.

We create our realities through our local interaction in language – and then verbalise our observation of those realities through description in other local interactions – and so on, and so on. A self-organising process where reality continually emerges – with the pattern of reality remaining static, or forming new patterns.

Alan.

*About thee hours later the thought above hit me. If you read between the lines you will observe the links to quantum physics.*

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From: Mark WILLIAMS  
Sent: Monday, 5 September 2005 16:32  
To: Byrne, Alan ; Scott GARDNER; Per JOHANSEN  
Subject: RE: More on ramblings

Do put these emails in chronological order to allow the suspense and drama of eureka punctuated heuristic enquiry to be communicated in the text of your thesis.

I still think that you should try to jot down commonly occurring phrases that you and others in your language games utter. I think that reoccurring phrases are important. It’s up to you to find out why.
For instance, in our language games around ECU Scott seems to call himself the "process man" - what does that mean? Tease it out in an email dialogue with him. Per says things like "read Gramsci" - what does he mean by that?

What do your management colleagues tend to repeat. What do they mean by those phrases which can become idiomatic of them and perhaps can become idioms that can impact on the language domain more widely.

I would like you to create a new idiom that could transform your managerial language domain!

Warm regards, Mark

From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Tuesday, 6 September 2005 09:25
To: 'Mark WILLIAMS'; Scott GARDNER; Per JOHANSEN
Subject: RE: More on ramblings
Attachments: RE: More on ramblings

Thanks Mark,

I am keeping all e-mails, each has a time/date stamp.

Regarding idioms – these seem to me to be symptomatic of the reality we have created locally, and have global implications. Where does an idiom come from? How does it emerge from local interactions to affect global patterns of conversation? My observation of idioms is that they are not ahistorical and they are open to interpretation which means they are more akin to a postmodernist view of the world – the meaning is not constrained by our description of it.

I will certainly pay attention to the idioms used by the people I interact with – I suspect they get used more in informal/shadow conversations.

Alan.

From: Scott Gardner
Sent: Tuesday, 6 September 2005 17:24
To: Byrne, Alan
Subject: RE: More on ramblings

Hi Guys

I am way behind in this conversation so please disregard if this seems like the bleeding obvious - but have you read Cresswell.J.(2003) Research Design which provides a great framework for capturing and possibly legitimating your approach in a matrix of ontological, epistemological and methodological relationships and configurations for various research purposes. It helped me to locate Rorty and pragmatism in my research methods scheme of things. Like Nutrimetics!!, Why Bears sh..t in the woods, or the history of Ayr Utd FC 1975-2005, "Ask me about it"?

See you Friday 9.30 to set up in NU9 for 10.00am.

regards
Scott
From: Mark WILLIAMS  
Sent: Tuesday, 6 September 2005 22:48  
To: Byrne, Alan ; Scott GARDNER; Per JOHANSEN  
Subject: RE: More on ramblings

Alan - how about this?

We form idioms of speech to crystalise our own language patterns and it seems that most of us change our idioms of speech depending upon what language game we are partaking.

1.. In organisations can we observe the major idioms of the various language domains of that organisation? (Such idioms would presumably be the ones spoken most often or with most effect.)
2.. Can we note what idioms we speak out within those organisational language games?
3.. Can we choose to listen and carefully entertain some rather than other idioms?
4.. Can we choose to pay attention and speak out some rather than other idioms?
5.. Why would we want to change our idioms other than to change things in general?
6.. What is our motive for desiring such a change?
7.. How will others respond to or construct us based on specifically our language domain idiom change?
8.. Might it be better to take the body language of our clothing rather than speech acts when desiring to change things?
9.. Etc, etc, etc

Regards, Mark

From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Wednesday, 7 September 2005 09:34  
To: 'Mark WILLIAMS'; Scott GARDNER; Per JOHANSEN  
Subject: RE: More on ramblings

Attachments: RE: More on ramblings

I guess what’s interesting is that we have turned to the importance of idioms.

It occurred to me the other day that I might find it difficult to identify idioms – idioms are ubiquitous in the Language – we don’t even realise we are using them. However having contemplated this issue I believe that if you have learnt another language you can identify idioms as being that part of one language you are unable to translate to another. This implies that idioms are cultural – even having different meanings within the same language spoken in different countries.

If idioms are cultural, they form part of our local interaction through language – the neo-pragmatic view would look to the usefulness of idioms – perhaps from a Vygotskian perspective they allow for a commonality in our understanding.

Which brings us to how we can use idioms, in an organisational context, to change individual and collective identities? I don’t believe there can be intent. Idioms emerge
in our interactions through language. You could introduce one, and it may take root in
the local language used – but would it change how we describe our reality, thereby
changing our individual and collective identities – a self-organising process?

Mark’s comments are interesting, as they point to an understanding of what the
organisation is, as reflected in the language used, and in particular the use of idioms. I
accept this reflection on our interactions. However I am not yet convinced that idioms
can in some sense be used to produce an outcome. This smacks of managerialism. I
prefer to see idioms as embedded in the language we use to interact with each other, a
symbol of relationship, a commonality in our understanding at a local level. Idioms
emerge and help form the reality we create together, locally, through language.

Regards,
Alan.

*Staying true to my anti-managerialist stand.*
Further to my thoughts on quantum physics and in particular observation/description:

‘Only through us does the world become world, because only by and in us does the world become described, theorized, known, and bright in consciousness’

‘In order to see, I have to be able to tell what I’m looking at: that is, I have to be able to put it into words. Just check now, and you will find that your whole visual field is bright – i.e. consciously perceived, formed, and intelligible – because it has so much language woven into it’

‘We are, we live, we represent ourselves to ourselves and to the world in our language – that is, in the flow of language through us…I am proposing a theatrical view of the self: a person is not a substance but a role, a dramatis persona’

These are extracts from Emptiness and Brightness from Don Cupitt. I like his idea of ‘brightness’ – the conscious perception of what is around you – conscious because you can describe it through language. To become bright in consciousness requires description.

The language used almost by implication creates a positive outlook – brightness – however I take on board the antithesis – that the description may darken your perception of the potentialities that exist – going back to the concept that through our description/observation we can limit the potential of a human being, in effect marginalising them through our interaction with others.

Alan.

Here I related Rorty and Cupitt through the concept of description. All this time I continue to wait for my research presentation which is to take place on Friday 9 September.
2.4 RESEARCH PROPOSAL PRESENTATION

I presented the research proposal on Friday 9 September 2005, following clearance from my supervisors that my work to date warranted such action. The research proposal had been distributed to two Edith Cowan University lecturers for review, prior to the presentation. The presentation was open to everyone, and it gave the reviewers the opportunity to ask any questions they may have had and to seek clarification.

I decided to put the presentation on Powerpoint as I believed this would be most acceptable to the audience. I have included the text of the Powerpoint presentation below. I presented these slides in 1 hour15 minutes, leaving 45 minutes for questions and discussion.

Following the presentation the reviewers formally feedback their comments. I then had to respond to these comments, and if acceptable both reviewers then recommend or otherwise the acceptance of my research proposal to the University. The stage following this is ethics clearance.

The presentation was as follows (each box represents a slide, pictures have been omitted):

What Causes an Organisation to be what it is and to become what it will be: A Postmodern Pragmatic Heuristic Reflexive Expedition

Presenter: Alan Byrne
Supervisors: Dr. Scott Gardner
Dr. Per Johansen
Dr. Mark Williams

Setting sail
Across seas of thought
Exploring thinkers
For enlightenment sought

No destination
But far to go
My sails full of wind
And my progress slow

Calling to port
To bathe a while
Then off again
With frown turned to smile

So many ports
So big a sea
So much to discover
When the self is set free
And what of the purpose
For such a trip
Perhaps to realise
We are all anchored ships

Setting the Context

Q: What led to you undertaking this voyage?

A: A desire to make sense of my life at work.

Q: Can you set out for us the progression in your thinking to date?

A: I will establish for you how I have come to question the following presuppositions of mainstream management theory:

1. Organisations are systems
2. The individual is privileged as the controller of organisational destiny
3. Senior management is privileged as the designers and drivers of human action in organisations


The overwhelming belief: Senior management provided the organisational design strategies and resources to get us to where they wanted. Staff sat back, rarely questioned and were either on-board or over-board.

My feeling: Business is a fantasy land, where only the few get to be princes and princesses.

Undertook an MBA at ECU and was introduced to the management philosophy of

**PROF. RALPH STACEY**

Eureka moment – a kindred spirit who openly questioned many of the assumptions of mainstream management theory.

This led me down the following path:
I became interested in the natural sciences, gaining greater understanding of the world around me. I read:

Chaos theory - Gleick
Self-organisation – Cohen, Waldrop
Einstein’s Theory of Relativity – Bodanis
Quantum Physics – Gribbin
Laws of Thermodynamics – Lightman

I learnt about the interconnectivity of everything, the unpredictability of the future and how things are not what they seem. This took me onto:

Co-operation and interconnected networks – Capra
Evolution – Darwin, Dennet
Co-operation at a planetary level – Lovelock
Co-operation at a human level – Axelrod
Co-operation at a cellular level - Margulis
Co-operation at a genetic level – Nicholsen

I learnt that we could question creationism, question fatalism and question competition, all with a view to acquiring a greater understanding of life. My original proposal focused on co-operation between people and the importance of relationship.

I then became interested in social networks and story telling. I read and exchanged correspondence with:

David Snowden – social networks and story telling
David Boje – narrative as a research method
Ralph Stacey – theory of complex responsive processes of relating

Finally I came to the conclusion that it was the work of Stacey which resonated with me:
  made sense to me; and
  persuaded me

I read Stacey’s books and those of his former students – Fonseca, Griffin, Shaw and Streatfield.

I believed in Stacey’s Theory of Complex Responsive Processes of Relating and idealistically wished to follow it’s teaching to the letter. I changed my proposal.

My supervisor’s advised me to read some philosophy and introduced me to a colloquium, which meets every Thursday at ECU. This was another Eureka moment.
I had always been interested in the use of language and in particular
Metaphor – Lissack, Morgan
Through reading: Stacey, Rorty, Wittgenstein, Grenz and Searle
I formed the view that reality was created through our interaction in
Language
This is summed up by me, as follows

Descartes says
Cogito ergo sum
Which privileges the one
I say
Colloquimur ergo sum ateque sumus
Which privileges no one

This positions me as an anti-realist, neo-pragmatist
It lays the foundations for questioning the presuppositions of mainstream
management theory
With a new focus on language – conversation/dialogue – I continued my
investigation

Stacey’s theory of Complex Responsive Processes of Relating

Relationship based – ethical
Privileges the social, not the individual
Relating is a process, not a system
Local conversations causes organisations to be and to become – transformative
and self-organising

Stacey’s theory constructed from ideas of the father of symbolic interactionism
George Mead (theory of conversation of gestures) and
Norbert Ellias (power relations), with reference to
Kant’s formative and rational teleologies

With an emphasis on dialogue I read:
Socrates: Open debate, convincing by reason
Bakhtin: Carnival and Menippean dialogue
Gadamer: Shared understanding
Habermas: Ideal speech situation, communicative competence
Vygotsky: Shared understanding

This led me to understand that business provides the setting for daily plays. It is
a stage, upon which each of us play a part, adapting our language to the roles
we play, being enabled/constrained by our fellow actors
From my new understandings I began to put together an initial diagram bringing together my sense making of what it is that causes an organisation to be and to become. This will be further developed as my voyage continues.

(See Figure 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current thought-in-progress: Linking/distinguishing social interaction through communication</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ontological perspective: Human reality is created through social interaction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Epistemological perspective: Human reality is created through communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination: Human reality is created by local interaction through language.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The reality we create, in our local interaction through language – we then observe/describe, enabling/constraining the potentiality of what is observed/described. Roles played are a result of social interaction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Related to Quantum Physics – Schrödinger’s Cat, Light Experiment</td>
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<tr>
<td>In Quantum world nothing is independent of the relationships that occur.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Method</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative Interpretative Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heuristic Research – Moustakas, Williams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emphasises connectedness, relationship – no subject/object issue, more in tune with anti-realist position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>direct, personal encounter with phenomenon being researched is essential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflexivity/Autoethnography – Ellis and Bochner, Stacey and Griffin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal experience very important in illuminating the organisation under study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provokes readers to reflect critically on their own experience and increase their understanding of that experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Heuristic inquiry and reflexivity are forms of research which are an interpretation and a subjective reflection on personal experience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Validity

Can you relate to what you are reading?
Can you gain insight into your own experiences by relating to mine and others?
Does the research make sense to you?
Does the research resonate with you?
Is the research persuasive to you?

There is a renewed appreciation for emotion, intuition and personal experience heralded by Feminist theory. This form of research can bring you into the worlds of experience unknown to you, from underrepresented people, allowing you to understand their marginalisation and gain an appreciation and understanding of their realities.

Research Ethics

- Heuristic inquiry and reflexivity are methods which allow me to express my own interpretation of organisational experience. As such the best I can do is to let people in the organisation know generally what I am doing.
- To protect the identities of staff I am locating the organisation in a different country and changing the organisation type.
- For those staff I interview, I will explain in more detail what I am doing, take notes with their permission and keep those notes off site. I will be reflecting on their comments and using that reflection in the thesis. Therefore they will not be identified or quoted.
- It will be my ethical responsibility to be caring and nurturing to all involved in the research, including myself.
- The resulting work will be no less valid as the fictionalisation will merely create a mirror context which reflects my thoughts and experience as well as those I converse with.

Research Significance (A)

To me:
Discovery of my management philosophy self
Discovery of my own authorial voice
Discovery of my own lyric writing style
Development of my conceptual model of dialogue
Discovery of what causes an organisation to be and to become

To you:
Gaining insight into your own work experience
Understanding what causes an organisation to be and to become
Realising that we are all equally deserving of respect and recognition in the work place

To others:
Universal application of the conceptual dialogical model
Research Significance (B)
Contribution to the Theory of Complex Responsive Processes of Relating. Adding to the growing volume of work in this area and enhancing understanding through providing a philosophical extension to the area of dialogue

Re-focus the attention of management towards the importance of relationship and the quality of our local interaction with each other through dialogue

As someone who believes that individual and collective identities are formed through our local interactions in conversation, perhaps the greatest significance will be my own interactions. Through my personal development I may influence/persuade those I interact with to take their own interactions more seriously.

From the Sea of Cortez (Steinbeck and Ricketts, 1941 p.3)
“Let us go,” we said, “into the Sea of Cortez, realising that we become forever part of it; and our rubber boots slogging through a flat of eelgrass, that the rocks we turn over in a tide pool, make us truly and permanently a factor in the ecology of the region. We shall take something away from it, but we shall leave something too”

Research Questions
My belief is that through this voyage of discovery the answer to the following question will emerge:

What causes an organisation to be what it is and to become what it will be?
Sub-questions:
Is the organisation a designed system which when acted upon causes organisations to be what they are and to become what they will be?;
Is it a formative, rationalist or transformative teleology that causes organisations to be what they are and to become what they will be?;
Is it an individual who causes the organisation to be what it is and to become what it will be?;
How do power relations cause an organisation to be what it is and to become what it will be?;
How does the type of dialogue practiced in the organisation cause the organisation to be what it is and to become what it will be?;
How does the type of subversion within the organisation cause the organisation to be what it is and to become with it will be?; and
How do the roles we play, the language we use and the theatre we create cause the organisation to be what it is and to become what it will be?

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of our exploring
Shall be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time

(Little Gidding, T. S. Eliot)
This concluded the presentation. There was time for several questions following the presentation, but these were focused mainly on the research.

2.5 **E-MAILS 12 SEPTEMBER 2005 – 7 OCTOBER 2005**

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From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Monday, 12 September 2005 09:39  
To: s.gardner; 'p.johansen; 'm.williams  
Subject: Presentation

G’day gentlemen,

Thank you for your support on Friday, and for organising the review, it was greatly appreciated.

Please pass my thanks on to my two reviewers. I have been considering their comments over the weekend.

It appears to me that I need to defend my research methodology in the research proposal. I did not offer a defence I merely stated what the methodology was (I did not believe that I needed to defend the approach).

It also occurs to me that much of what I wrote was research – it was not confined to the research section. What of researching the writings of philosophers and others – is this not research? Perhaps our ideas of what constitutes research is too limited?

I also thought about the ethical position. Stacey’s approach does not include anyone else other than the researcher. It is about their interactions with reference to theory/literature. I would prefer to develop a conceptual model based on my experiences and readings. Do I have to interview other people? My preference is not to. I prefer to try to understand our interactions and through insight gained by my experience and readings develop a conceptual model.

I have been reading a book on Foucault, discussing his work ‘Madness and Civilization’ where Foucault looks at madness through different knowledge ages, seeking to understand when reason becomes unreason (madness). They speak of the Renaissance thinker for whom the world was a book, to be ‘read’. Interpretation and metaphorical significance, not observation (subject-object not description) and scientific experiment were the order of the day. This Renaissance episteme gave way to the Classical episteme – the Age of Reason, Cartesian. Knowledge was a result of scientific observation. This episteme eliminated the effect of the subject. Further knowledge ages followed, but perhaps in the commercial world we remain in the Age of Reason.

Through reading, my experience and human interactions I seek to gain insights and develop a conceptual model. I believe Autoethnography and Heuristic Inquiry is the way to go. The question is, is the University prepared to accept it, or is it stuck in the Age of Reason?

Footnote: At a meeting of our Colloquium last Thursday, when prompted to give some career advice to one of our members I stated ‘Follow your heart’. This can be taken as
being a Cartesian dualism between head and heart, however this is not what was meant – in fact it was the opposite. I don’t differentiate between head and heart – they are one and the same. The idiom ‘Follow your heart’ for me is a battle cry against the Age of Reason – it involves being receptive to your whole body – senses, feelings and all - it involves trusting yourself.

Regards,
Alan.

The presentation did not go quite as I had planned. In particular there was an emphasis on the research method, for so long in 2003/04 the focus of my attention. My chosen reflexive methodology was autoethnography and as anticipated it gave air to questions relating to subjectivity, legitimacy and validation. I had hoped there would be more concentration on what I had discovered so far. Nevertheless I was steeled to the battle ahead and finally was discovering my own voice.

From: Mark WILLIAMS
Sent: Monday, 12 September 2005 13:53
To: Byrne, Alan ; Scott GARDNER; Per JOHANSEN
Subject: RE: Presentation

Thank you Alan. I agree with your reflections.

Of course you don't need to have formal interviews or quotes from other participants in your research. You have sufficient scholarship and persuasive argumentation and style to make a formidable case for exclusively using your own reflective practitioner empirical data of memoirs and action research field notes based on the authority of your professional experience and warranted by your own living and evolving management theories developed in dialogue with credible thinkers and other credible professionals. All you really need to support your case in the literature are the massive authorities of Denzin and Lincoln (either the 1996, 2000, or 2004 editions) and Reason and Bradbury (2000) Handbooks of Qualitative Research and Action Research respectively. But you go far beyond that in your journey. You have no worries whatsoever.

You presented a remarkable, erudite, lucid, and powerful proposal that would have flown high at any world-class university including, in my opinion and experience, Uni of Hull, Oxford (where I visited while my sister did her Masters), Universitas de Kuntz, Uni of Stirling, UCLA, St Mary's in San Francisco, Uni of Toronto, and the Australian G8s, Curtin or Murdoch, and the others, especially the ones with vigorous action research programmes including the College of Action Research at Southern Cross, Swinbourne, UTS, RMIT, etc etc etc (you can check by doing a google with the words 'action research university'!).

I think that the most important point made to my hearing (sorry Llandis but I had to leave during some of your reply) was Paul Jackson recommending you to create more play and lighten up as you gain confidence in your post-modern authorial voice. Your viva citing Richardson on crystallisation in reply to the jaded concept of triangulation was masterful and deft!

Our 9th doctoral student ethical clearance highlighting reflective practitioner action research has just sailed through as has the successful graduation of the 7th doctor using
these approaches here in the Faculty of Business and Law at ECU. We are clearly at the beginning of a great surfing wave and I see you getting a near perfect score for your ride as you have just completed a ripper of a stand on the board after a flying paddle and crest.

We could have handled the time better to allow some discussion and questions from the intellectual powerhouses in the room. But this is our fault.

I would like to send out this email to elicit responses from those present. Is that OK with all of you?

Warm regards, Mark

From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Monday, 12 September 2005 14:36
To: 'Mark WILLIAMS'
Subject: RE: Presentation

Attachments: RE: Presentation

Thank you for the reply Mark. Your enthusiasm continues to light a path that keeps me off the rocks.

It would be very useful to get a response from the others present.

Regards,
Alan.
From: Scott Gardner  
Sent: Monday, 12 September 2005 14:38  
To: Byrne, Alan  
Cc: p.johansen; mark.williams  
Subject: Re: Presentation

Hi Alan

Mark, Per had I had a bit of post presentation chat this morning. We agreed that conceptually your work is excellent and probably ground breaking. We also discussed the dilemma of how to balance your desired position on method versus the detail required by the reviewers. My experience with research proposals suggests that you need to detail out your approach and defence thereof beyond the high level philosophical justification offered. In the event you will have to respond to the reviewers changes, but may also choose to defend your reasons for not adopting these. Mark has agreed to help us package the responses and build a proposal which meets the specifications for doctoral studies.

Will be in touch regarding a meeting re how to address the reviewers report.

regards

Scott

From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Monday, 19 September 2005 11:55  
To: 'm.williams'  
Subject: Feedback Thursday 15/9/2005

Hi Mark,

In asking each person the question you asked on Thursday, ‘What is your current role’ you were keeping the conversation going, fulfilling your role as an edifying philosopher!

I have begun writing my SUPPORT of my research methodology. I use the word support instead of defence. What I realise is that being a postmodern pragmatist I can use whatever aspects of different methodologies that make sense to me. I don’t have to adhere to any methodology to establish rigour or validity.

The difficulty is that people continue to evaluate research methods such as autoethnography utilising language which belongs to different research methodologies. We must learn to use new descriptions when discussing the validity, rigour, legitimation of new interpretative research.

Here is an Irish poem, I learnt while at school in Dublin. I now recognise my attachment to the language, and its resonance with me as I speak those words. ‘Riocht na Greine’ can be translated as ‘voyage of discovery’.
A ship came from Valparaiso
Let out her moorings to lie at harbour
Her name to me did call to mind,
Kingdoms of sunshine, lands of destiny
"Be stirred," she said, "to voyages long,"
"with me from clouds and from fog,"
"Discover beneath the Blue Andes"
"A wondrous city, bright as a jewel"
But I was young and I would not go.
From the homeland of my soul.
I yet believed that there were muses for me
Wonderful poems and the stories.
The ship departed over misty sea
Far beheld and her top like gold.
She wrote her tale on the parchment of the night
High in the path of the star of the sea.
She will come back to me again
I will see the white city under the mountain
Beaside the sea of peaceful.
My God, I believe in it still.

Regards,
Alan.

Bit of home sickness creeping in here, but the power of your own language should never be underestimated; I wish I had learnt this when younger when I dismissed Gaelic as being irrelevant. I also choose to describe my research support rather than defence, acknowledging neo-pragmatic thinking on language.
From: Mark WILLIAMS  
Sent: Thursday, 22 September 2005 14:07  
To: Byrne, Alan  
Subject: RE: Colloquium meeting Thursday

Alan - I sent this out this morning.  
Dear thinkers and friends from all over the world

Thomas Schildhauer tells me that the IEB masters programme is forging ahead - congratulations to all the team in Berlin.

I am reading Nigel Leaves second book on Don Cupitt's philosophical journey of over 30 years and over 30 respected philosophical books. He writes: "Ethics consists of verbal judgements ... socially constructed fictions adopted by people to help them live in harmony with each other, and they persist until by general agreement they become outdated or unworkable".

I am beginning to realise that a lot of professional action research is inherently about ethics. I think that this may be a big part of what Jack Whitehead, and also Peter Taylor, have been forging by the strength, brilliance and growing authority of their projects.

Our team here at ECU is meeting as usual this Thursday afternoon. We are looking forward to hearing from Edmond La Vertu as he reports on his nearly completed rich modelling doctoral thesis entitled "Emancipating a professional’s Anthill using action research professional practice with information systems professionals as the crux: gnothe se auton; non, je regrette rien; die lichtung; and "all the world’s a stage."

Alan Byrne writes in response to our last Thursday's doctoral colloquium: (see e-mail 19 September 2005 11:55)  
Warm Regards, Mark

This e-mail pointed to a move towards ethics in Mark’s thinking, which was later to resurface in my own. Remember I was attracted to Stacey due to his ethical stance.

From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Monday, 3 October 2005 13:12  
To: s.gardner; ’p.johansen'; 'm.williams'  
Subject: Update

Gentlemen,

Trust you are all rested and eagerly awaiting the throng of students for the next semester.

I have been doing some laissez-faire thinking on the title for my thesis, intending to refocus my attention. In the process I began to write down the framework, as the title would not suggest itself.

I offer the following framework:
1. Develop a conceptual model which illuminates what causes organisations to be – a philosophical perspective;
2. Within that model seek to understand marginalisation – again from a philosophical perspective;
3. Understand my own situation within the aforementioned contexts – an autoethnographical account; and
4. Universalise this study through a drama (ethno/story/whatever).

Regarding Hegel’s dialectic, I have been considering the negation of the thesis. From a neo-pragmatic stand I no longer believe the negation is necessary to derive a synthesis. I prefer to use the word ALTHESIS (not sure if there is such a word, but I will explain). You have the thesis and the althesis (alternative thesis) to arrive at a synthesis. You do not need to use the antithesis – though the althesis can of course be the antithesis. Through such a dialectic process I will arrive at a marginalisation synthesis.

For many marginalisation is extreme – the gay teacher, the boat people etc. I don’t preclude everyday people from the marginalisation factor, nor underestimate the impact.

Marginalisation needs to be understood from a philosophical perspective. It is intertwined with the slave master relationship. I have come to appreciate that we are all slaves to official ideologies. When we try to subvert/escape those ideologies we are marginalised. Official ideologies are multi layered, including the idea of family, citizen, worker, boss, capitalism etc. To truly escape our position of slaves would indeed be difficult as we construct the very ideologies that enslave us.

Regards,
Alan.

This was in response to the reviewers comments at the presentation. I was expressing the insight that what I had actually been on about was marginalisation of staff.

From: Mark WILLIAMS
Sent: Monday, 3 October 2005 14:27
To: Byrne, Alan ; Scott GARDNER; Per JOHANSEN
Subject: RE: Update

sparkling insights glittering from the lights through the crystal

I like the 4 points ... also the creative reworking of the dialectic
yes, perhaps we do marginalise ourselves from own constructions by our own constructions

Cupitt says that the final ethic is solar living in that we choose to live brightly in life rather than withdrawing or limiting ourselves usually under the sway of some wretched platonic ideal

My own opinion is that he is on the right track although ethical positions change depending on the patterns of the person and the patterns of life surrounding us

Regards, Mark
Hi Alan (Mark and Per).

Alan - glad to hear that you have rallied again with the ideas flowing thick and fast. The momentum is there and I have more time to assess your material, so let's get moving on the reviewers comments and ethics approval.

I hope that we can make this a cooperative production using Mark's philosophical knowledge and record of adept packaging of research proposals; Per's knowledge of Stacey, the Hegelian dialectic and the strengths and limitations of grand theory in a management thesis; and my sense of what makes a good, useful and accessible thesis, from a practical point of view. ie Let's be clear on what exactly we are trying to achieve here from a practical and theoretical point of view? Having read the reviewers comments (with which I largely concur), we need little more toeing the party line, on what constitutes an acceptable PhD in Management, and appropriate methodology to base this on. On that, I suggest that we meet next week (preferably Friday am) with a view to the following-

1- How to present a more concrete and defensible methodology section in the proposal?
2- Clarify the exact contribution of Neo-Pragmatism to a better understanding of and/or improvements to, organisations from the perspective of marginalised staff, and other parties beyond the researcher/journey maker.
3- Walk through the reviewer's comments and develop an agreed approach to addressing each point either through philosophical counter argument (Mark's preferred MO), and/or action points and changes to the proposal to incorporate the reviewers suggestions. I will be strongly encouraging the latter with respect to methodological issues.

How about Friday Oct 14, 9.30am? 17.103.
regards
Scott

Scott continues to display his practical approach towards getting the job done. What he fails to realise is that at this point my own voice is beginning to erupt; cracks are beginning to appear in my veneer of conventionality.
From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Friday, 7 October 2005 07:56
To: 'm.williams'
Subject: Supervisor

G’day Mark,

Given the nature of my voyage of discovery I believe I can only circumnavigate the stormy waters ahead with the assistance of a native of those waters.

I wish to remain unfettered in my pursuit of wisdom and therefore refuse to call into the port of mainstream mediocrity.

Following our discussion yesterday I thought of a new title… ‘Being left out of the conversation: Coping with being marginalised. A management philosophers postmodern pragmatic expedition’

I feel that the word postmodern is the key and is complemented by heuristic/autoethnographic/reflexive type research. The pragmatism refers to my use of whatever suits with no intention to follow an ideal. With your assistance I will continue my development as a management philosopher.

You are the native that can support me on this voyage.

I therefore request that you take on the role of my Principal Supervisor. My vessel carries many provisions and there is little room for personnel, whose added weight will slow my progress and whose additional comment may muddy the waters. My preference is to have only one supervisor with the courage to break free from the chains of conventionality and the vision to charter new waters for others to follow.

Regards,
Alan.

I decided that I needed the encouragement of Mark, rather than the practical approach of Scott. Mark was more in tune with my own thinking, and I was getting very tired to trying to fit into a round hole.
From: Scott Gardner
Sent: Friday, 7 October 2005 12:56
To: Byrne, Alan
Cc: m.williams; p.johansen
Subject: RE: Update

Attachments: alan b=pjmk2.doc; ReviewersReport BP-AB.doc

Hi Alan
Thanks for that- it makes life a lot easier at my end (refers to my agreeing to change my study leave day from Friday to Thursday). Mark and Per should be fine for that time slot.
Will meet my office then find a room to go through the reviewers comments and agree next steps.

Have read your response with reference to Stacey and Griffin's and other writers on research methods - which is well written and goes some way towards addressing the high level methodological issues identified by the reviewers. However i still think (as process facilitator), we need agree a more grounded, point by point approach to re-packaging your proposal and allied response to the reviewers for the graduate school. We can then fill out the documents for the ethics committee. Once this is prepared and approved you can start building the thesis proper.

Mark and I have had a chat about the focus and direction of the study- if you want to concentrate more on Neo- Pragmatism and self insight, I will pass the principal supervisor role to Mark at the end of semester. This makes sense based on his track record, knowledge and established network in the reflective practice area. These are essential to get you through all the hoops including final examination. Per and I can contribute more, if the focus is more on the original idea of how organisations become what they are, with specific reference to the documented narrative and experiences of marginalised members. To me this is more pertinent to change management (our original point of departure and potential lecturing specialism for A. Byrne), -as it presents a useful alternative perspective on the views of the dominant coalition and how patterns of organisational life are generated, shaped and perpetuated.

Have a good think about where you want to take the thesis, and how best to address the attached reviewers comments for Thursday.
Regards
Scott

And so I was in possession of the reviewer’s comments, and noted that Scott felt changes were required (when were they not?) and also asked me to consider Mark as my principal supervisor. I knew that was coming.
2.6 RESEARCH PROPOSAL REVIEWERS COMMENTS

My two reviewers were Dr. Paul Jackson and Dr. Llandis Barrett-Pugh. Their comments are set out in the actual review forms:

**Edith Cowan University**  
The Graduate School

*Please use the headings provided as appropriate, to a maximum of about three pages*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reviewer:</th>
<th>Paul Jackson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student:</td>
<td>Alan Byrne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Level:</td>
<td>Honours ☐ Masters by Research ☐ PhD ☒ Prof. Doctorate ☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Title of Thesis:** What causes an organisation to be what it is and to become what it will be: A Postmodern pragmatic heuristic reflexive expedition

1. **Clarity of statement of the research problem**

The research problem is fairly clear and quite ambitious, revealing the author's journey of discovery, learning and increasing disaffection with current methods of gaining insight through conventional data collection and analysis methods. Being so long however, I sometimes lost the actual thrust of the proposal, which is obviously deeply thought through but needs to maintain focus.

2. **Rationale for conducting the study**

The main sense I gain from the proposal is that the author wishes to undertake a journey of personal discovery and possibly construct a conceptual model from the insights accumulated on this journey. This model may be of use to others seeking to understand how organizations “develop their nature”. But to undertake such a journey is one thing: it is whom you take with that is important for a PhD. For me there is overemphasis on the own journey of the author and not enough on the fellow travellers and the contribution that will be made to their learning. The post-modern language game is generally more concerned with what is interesting, perhaps playful and seductive, where this proposal is somewhat heavy-handed and self-centred.

3. **Review of literature and theoretical framework**

The literature review is extensive, spanning a range of thinkers. For a proposal, it is unnecessarily detailed in its exegesis of the writings of Stacey. Other sources include
Kant, Wittgenstein, Sartre, Vygotsky, Mead, Socrates, (consistently misspelled), Habermas, Bakhtin etc., revealing a deeply philosophical orientation. A synthesis of these in a PhD is very ambitious. Sartre and Foucault are mentioned in the model in figure 2, but there are no bibliographic references to these authors, suggesting the proposal is a work in progress, which is fine.

The emphasis upon marginalisation suggests that the author should also be concerned with some aspect of how power relations have come into being and recognise that much of the power exercised over staff consists of an internalisation and acceptance of institutions of self-actualisation and self-observation. Nietzsche, Foucault and Nicolas Rose (1991, Governing the soul: the shaping of the private self, Routledge, London) may be useful.

“The falseness of a judgement is to us not necessarily an objection to a judgement. The question is to what extent it is life-advancing, life preserving, species preserving, and our fundamental tendency is to assert that the falsest judgements are the most indispensable to us...that to renounce false judgements would be to renounce life, would be to deny life” (Nietzsche, BGE)

The author is uncomfortable with the command and control ideology implied by management techniques and seems to suggest this is the only one. For example, on p10 the author says "At this moment management exercises human freedom, whilst no one else does". This is a big claim with little face validity. There are many other approaches to management and many other kinds of worker other than this - self-managed teams, stakeholder management, participatory management, workplace democracy etc. Is this just the author’s experience or is a universal claim being made? Care must be taken in making of such claims.

There is also management literature which highlights the discrepancy between management ideology and its results which may bear reading, for example Pfeffer, J. & Sutton, R. I. 2000, The Knowing-Doing Gap : How Smart Companies Turn Knowledge into Action, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, Massachusetts.

4. Statement of the research question

I believe the list of research sub-questions to be too long and perhaps not answerable in the time and space available to a PhD. Focus on one or a few related questions in the list.

How do you reconcile a post-modern approach with what seems to be a neo-Kantian causality paradigm? Is this an issue?

I was anticipating more existentialist discussion of the question, that is, the nature of being should be examined: the questions of essence and existence. How does an organisation become what it is? (e.g. Nietzsche, Sartre 'being and nothingness', Heidegger 'being and time'). What is the essence of an organization, such that there is anything which can influence its becoming?

5. Proposed methodology and data analysis
It seems to me that there is no necessary relationship between complex responsiveness theory and the post-modern paradigm. I believe Stacey's insight's can be investigated in a number of ways, not only auto-ethnographically. Indeed, standard ethnography complemented by interviews and documents seem to be a perfect match for his theories. Auto-ethnography is only very briefly described and I gain little sense of its details: the proposal requires more explanation of the rigour of the approach and the actual data collection methods that will be used. I get no sense in which this method will be different from a personal narrative, which is simply an expression of one's own views. Explain, for example, how you will not 'pollute' the data by causing people to give the responses you want to hear or which you imply in your type of discourse.

Radical constructivism or anti realism does not mean that there is no objectivity and that everything can only be subjective: it just means that objectivity may mean something different to the reality proposed by naïve empiricism, viz Wittgenstein's private language argument.

A clear statement of quality criteria is required: how will a reader tell the difference between a good job and a bad job, between sense and nonsense? How will the putative reader be qualified to be make this judgment?

Being auto-ethnographic (a method with which I am not familiar), I assume the author's reflections will be the only source of data and insight (although this is not quite clear) and that a single organisation is being studied. Therefore the author needs to address questions of validity more comprehensively. I suggest either strengthening the case for validity through triangulation or peer-review of some kind or by obviously and explicitly limiting the claims which are being made for the thesis and which are implicit in the title. I would like to see the title and/or research question clearly reflect the limits to the claims.

There are some ethical considerations here that need clarifying. Any participants must know they are subjects at any time where the researcher may be collecting data and have given their permission. Further, they must be able to refuse to participate and withdraw at any time and have all records of their participation destroyed. The author is a manager within the organisations: how will he ensure that this power does not become a coercive feature in data collection? I suspect it will not be enough to say "these are my reflections about what is said", as this would obviate the need for any ethics clearance at all in such studies - but I am not an ethics expert.

6. Recommendations

The proposal has merit and should proceed to the thesis phase. But I recommend several changes that may help to keep the research on-track and bounded, as well as conform to the requirements for a PhD, published in ‘Doctoral & Master by Research Handbook, 2005’. According to these requirements, I would summarise my recommendations as follows:

- Rationalise the scope of the research sub-questions
- Improve validation of data and methods of triangulation or reduce the claims (most clearly in the title)
- Describe more thoroughly the auto-ethnographic method
- Read more on power relations (Nietzsche, Foucault)

In the language game of post-modernism, the focus is on generating original insight, of which this candidate is clearly capable. But emphasise the conceptual contribution more and adopt a lighter style in the post-modern vein that entrances the reader.

Signed: ___________________________ Date: ___/___/___

Edith Cowan University
The Graduate School
Candidates

[Please use the headings provided as appropriate, to a maximum of about three pages]

Reviewer: Llandis Barratt-Pugh
Student: Alan Byrne

Course Level: Honours ☐ Masters by Research ☐ PhD ☐ Prof. Doctorate ☐

Title of Thesis: What causes and organisation to be what it is and to become what it will be: A Postmodern Heuristic Reflexive Expedition.

1. Clarity of statement of the research problem

My critique may well be aimed at both this study and autoethnography. I think any proposal should recognise the key area of 'defense' that will be necessary after the study is complete. It is important in this case to be clear about how the outcomes of the study will meet the ECU criteria for original contribution to knowledge etc. Holt in Int J of Qual Methods 2(1) 2003 does this very well.

I think that autoethnography is an exciting mode of research. It is important as with all studies however to be careful that the subject of the research determines the method of approach and not visa versa.

The passion and focus is well presented but I would encourage the researcher to refine the focus of the study further.
2. *Rationale for conducting the study*

I believe that the underlying themes of the marginalisation of subjects within organisations, how this occurs through linguistic control mechanisms, and what effect it has upon organisational subjects, is a very worthy area of study.

It appears the researcher is well situated to conduct such an ethnography.

3. *Review of literature and theoretical framework*

The literature of a philosophical nature is well mastered and synthesised. I believe that there are some additional literature areas to do with organisational language and research that would complement the current review: Allan Luke, James Gee, Paul Du Gay, Catherine Casey, Nigel Rapport, Hardy and Palmer, Richard Dawkins.

Perhaps the literature should be aligned with and focussed upon the subject of the research (at the centre) rather than upon the researcher himself. Realigning the literature might take the focus off the personal discovery and onto the task set for the study.

4. *Statement of the research question*

In terms of the broad research questions at the moment I feel that Giddens and Actor Network Theory provide contrasting but adequate answers to the questions.

I would encourage therefore a more specific research focus that reflects the current decade or organisational relations.

The questions need to be more focused to provide the start of the audit trail for the investigation.

5. *Proposed methodology and data analysis*

Currently I have concerns at the marriage between questions which are concerned with grand theory and a methodology which focusses on a single case or more singular interpretation of the world.

Perhaps a 'thesis of the thesis', an explanation of how the researcher sees the current relations might aid the exploration.

The proposal is very light, as most are at this stage, on time numbers and relational contacts. I think it needs to have some targets at least in terms of who will contribute how and when. More anchors would help the study progress. If the focus is going to be on 'self' then a structural account of this interrogative process should be included I feel.

There are also the ethical issues of how to inform people and allow them to not contribute. Also the issues associated with an in-house interviewer and valid responses should be accounted for.

It is most important that the researcher details 'explicitly' within the thesis how reliability and validity is being accounted for within such a methodology, and exactly how the thesis is making a contribution to the stock of knowledge.
6. **Recommendations**

This is brave and bold proposal.

I thank Alan for an interesting and stimulating read and listen. He has raised an interesting debate. He displays all the capability to produce a great study and has already began to put the philosophy component into "PhD' which is so often missing in more mundane studies.

My comments are made to protect his process and help meet the 'rules' of the game. I know he will enjoy the challenge and exploration producing an informative narrative. I do want that completion to meet the terms of reference for PhD.

The researcher displays significant understanding of the philosophical basis for the research and intellectual capability to steer and complete a PhD study.

However, I feel that it is imperative to focus on more specific research questions from the start of the study. I am concerned that the breadth of the current proposal and the openness of the stated method may be insufficient to guide the research direction. I have made some starting suggestions in this area which I hope may help the study achieve the final goal and still be an inventive exploration.

I believe that the proposal hints at a more specific focus and I would recommend that the candidate give serious thought to refining the questions driving the study.

As autoethnography is by its nature a very open methodology I feel the supervisors and the researcher may need some more detailed terms of reference (research questions) to guide the study as the data collection continually opens up new lines of inquiry. Indeed it might be prudent to consider how the autoethnography may be supported by related ethnographic data collection as was hinted at during the actual proposal.

Similarly the proposal could benefit from a more detailed account of the ethical and logistic timetable for the research (who, why, when and how) with at least a broad overview of the potential analysis process. Interrogation of self needs just the same framework of proposed interrogation.

I am glad that such a study can be voiced at ECU B&L Faculty and would like to be a critical friend during the process ahead.

14.09.05

*Signed: ___________________________ Date: __/__/___*
From: Mark WILLIAMS  
Sent: Friday, 7 October 2005 13:13  
To: Byrne, Alan  
Subject: RE: Supervisor

How about you're the Captain and I'll play the role of resident edifying philosopher?

I bumped into Scott and he spoke first saying that he is sending an email to indicate that he thinks it best if the paperwork was done to reflect the new situation.

All seems plain sailing from now on after the intermittent squalls of the last few weeks.

Regards, Mark

From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Monday, 10 October 2005 09:56  
To: 'Scott Gardner'  
Cc: m.williams; p.johansen  
Subject: RE: Update

Attachments: RE: Update

Thanks Scott,

I will see you all on Thursday at 10am.

Re: direction of thesis. I HAVE given this considerable thought. I now have a new title which awakens a new found enthusiasm: ‘Being left out of the conversation: Coping with being marginalised. A management philosophers postmodern pragmatic expedition’.

This should leave no doubt that I really want this to be a doctorate of philosophy. This is what interests me and provides the cement that holds the thesis wall together. Rationally it follows from my experiences and studies to date. Understanding organisations as human interaction through conversation offers a symbolic interactionist view of the world, though pragmatically retaining some realism where it lacks relevancy…as Rorty points out, why bother questioning that which is of no use to us.

So if you accept this view of organisations, then marginalisation can be understood in this context – hence being excluded from the conversation in the title. I did consider using oppression rather than marginalisation, however oppression is too extreme, as is most people’s understanding of marginalisation. I wish to look at ‘ordinary everyday marginalisation’ experienced by ordinary people.

The overarching framework for my study is management philosophy, inspired initially by Stacey, whom I believe will become a prominent management philosopher. I want to pose questions, improve understanding, open spaces – not provide answers.
In this sense the study is non-managerialist. My intention is not to provide something which management can use, as this flies in the face of ‘who I be’. I will not construct a change methodology – I will seek to question the ethics/morality of ‘official ideologies’ and how they function to enslave us all. The change will be the change in human identity – that which makes us what we are and what we will become.

I look forward to further discussion.

Regards,
Alan.

From: Mark WILLIAMS
Sent: Monday, 10 October 2005 15:30
To: Byrne, Alan
Subject: RE: Update

Wow!

As for Thursday's meeting, perhaps it’s wise to mainly listen and be part of the conversation in a quietly responsive mode.

Alan, I must admit to becoming excited about the possibilities for us as a conversing language domain of self-expressed management philosophers.

Chaio, Mark

From: Scott Gardner
Sent: Monday, 10 October 2005 17:56
To: Byrne, Alan
Cc: m.williams; p.johansen
Subject: RE: Update

Hi Alan

We can talk around this title and how best to cut the cloth to progress things to the next stage. It looks like Mark might be best placed to help you do this- but we can discuss that on Thursday.

On another tack I would like use your experience in some shape or form for teaching next year, but we can sort that out once i am clearer on what units I have been assigned. see you 10.am
regards
Scott
Hi Mark,

I believe I need to be more up-front with this study. This follows on from my review of the examiner’s reports and our discussion with Ed last Thursday.

Have a read of the attached draft and let me know what you think.

On another issue, I see that Joondalup campus offers units in philosophy. What’s the story if I wanted to ‘sit-in’ on some of these lectures? Do you have the contacts so I could attend without paying? (of course I would not be registered nor sitting for exams etc). Do you think it’s a good idea?

See you for Thursday morning.

Alan.

My own voice has started to erupt, there is nothing anyone can do now but sit back and listen as the molten language pours forth from my mouth. I also indicated my desire to learn more philosophy, this was due to my desire to eventually lecture in the subject. The draft introduction referred to can be found in its entirety at 2.8.1.4.

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This is writing with a passion Alan. With such energy you will finish the thesis quickly and write white hot. I urge you to continue writing in this vein.

I have made some suggestions in the first few paragraphs - see attached. You do not need to accept the changes.

Will this writing style be the only style you will use . . . or will this style be one of a number of voice and authorial signatures in the thesis?

Warm regards, Mark
Forgot - if you get the name of the lecture on the units I will email directly asking if you can sit in on the lectures.

However, I do suggest that a better idea would be to start of little special interest group of management philosophers here in the Faculty. Philosophy taught without passion is a bore.

Warm regards, Mark

Hi Alan

See email below.

Warm regards, Mark

Hi Mark
Yes, that's fine.
Alan

Alan and David
One of my doctoral candidates, Mr Alan Byrne, would like to attend some of your philosophy lectures.
If it is OK with you if he emails you for further information?

Regards, Mark
Good morning Dr. Tapper and Dr. Ryan,

My name is Alan Byrne, I am a PhD candidate and Dr. Mark Williams is one of my supervisors. Mark has e-mailed you and with your agreement I now forward my request.

Philosophy has a starring role in my thesis. I would greatly appreciate being able to ‘sit-in’ on your lectures when possible. I am assuming there will be no charge for attendance – I certainly won’t be handing in assignments, registering, nor taking exams.

If you can oblige me, I would be grateful if you could let me know:

1. When you lecture in Joondalup?
2. The philosophy unit(s) you lecture in and class times?

I will then give you advance notice as to when I would like to attend.

Regards,
Alan Byrne

The supervisors meeting with Mark, Scott and Per took place on Thursday 13 October 2005.

Hi Mark

I have supplied most of the information you were seeking – however I need to discuss with you the bits I have left unanswered. The commendation was easy.

I have only included the positive comments from the reviewers (not sure if you want the more critical). They are all from Llandis, who has been nothing but supportive. I could find nothing positive from the review by Paul Jackson, in the sense that his review is critical.

Further to yesterday’s meeting I have to admit that my thinking became disjointed. I can be seduced by rational thinking as this is where my professional career has been submerged for many years. I felt myself succumbing to the rationality of Scott’s argument and could easily relate to his ‘view’.
However it is not what I want. I wish to release the more creative light within me, both in writing and in thought. I wish to rebel against such rationality that has enslaved my thinking for so many years.

To date I have made three significant changes to my research proposal based on such rational advice, and the modernist pragmatic approach towards stakeholder satisfaction. Imagine how it feels when the person on whose advice you made those changes, over the period of one year, now feels unable to support the proposal (and this after giving the proposal presentation) without further changes. I don’t believe that my proposal(s) was ever seriously reviewed until after the presentation. There have been intervening papers as well, which you have not seen, which set out my professional history and how I came to this point – though once again I get the feeling they were never seriously reviewed as I am being asked again for the same information.

Frankly this is unacceptable. For the first time since I began this process, I felt that I was back at school – the old master/slave relationship – an inequality arose at that meeting. As usual in such circumstances, I constrained myself from speaking my mind, fearing breaking the relationships irretrievably – indicating once again that I had slipped back into that enslaved role. Right now I am simmering, by next week I will be back on track, with a new principal supervisor. I will send an e-mail on this decision to all on Monday.

Regards,
Alan.

You may gather that I was not pleased with the way the meeting was handled, nor with the outcome. My restraint, whilst rational, emotionally was released in my writing. I knew that this is how I must write, writing could be an emotional release, a coping mechanism.

I attached the following commendation to this e-mail, as I was asked to complete a referee’s report for an academic award for supervision for Dr. Williams. This included inserting positive comments from the reviewers of my research proposal:

Significant comments from the proposal reviewers are quoted below:

“This is a brave and bold proposal”
“...an interesting and stimulating read and listen. He has raised an interesting debate. He displays all the capability to produce a great study and has already began to put the philosophy component into ‘PhD’ which is so often missing in more mundane studies”
“The researcher displays a significant understanding of the philosophical basis for the research and intellectual capability to steer and complete a ‘PhD’ study”
“I am glad that such a study can be voiced at ECU B&L Faculty and would like to be a critical friend during to process ahead”
I would like to make the following commendations regarding Mark’s role as the principal supervisor:

1. Mark is a kindred spirit who provides an oasis in a desert of conventionality. Were it not for the intellectual sustenance he provides I would not be enjoying this PhD voyage of discovery.
2. Mark’s brightness continues to motivate me when it would be easier for me to jump ship and settle on dry land.
3. Mark is ALWAYS:
   - Approachable
   - Interested
   - Creative
   - Welcoming
   - Non-judgemental
   - Motivational
   - Inspirational
4. Mark is a character who is neither mundane nor pretentious.
5. Mark is an edifying philosopher who keeps the conversation going.

In summary I have found Mark to be an excellent supervisor who provides a shining light that continually steers me clear of the rocks and keeps my vessel on the open seas, free of encumbrances. He believes in what I am doing. He has helped me find my authorial voice and encouraged my free writing style. I am indebted to his generosity of spirit, his joie de vie.
From: Mark WILLIAMS  
Sent: Friday, 14 October 2005 12:32  
To: Byrne, Alan  
Subject: RE: Commendations  

Thank you so much Alan. I actually have tears in my eyes.

Similar outstanding abilities you see in me I, as if in a translucent mirror, see in you. You are at the moment, and have since I first meet you, and will continue to be I am sure, an inspiration through your courage, forthrightness and your creative substantial contributions.

Some mutual respect between colleagues happening here.

From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Friday, 14 October 2005 12:25  
To: 'Alan TAPPER'  
Subject: RE: Lectures in Philosophy  
Attachments: RE: Lectures in Philosophy  

Thanks Alan,

The topic was ‘What causes an organisation to be what it is, and to become what it will be: A postmodern pragmatic, heuristic, reflexive expedition’

Following my research proposal presentation the topic is now:

Being left out of the conversation: Coping with being marginalised. A management philosopher’s postmodern pragmatic expedition.

I prefer the words postmodern pragmatism to neo-pragmatism. My favourite philosophers are Richard Rorty and Ralph Stacey (Prof. Stacey would have nowhere near the status or philosophical credentials of Rorty, but he makes sense to me and I am certain will become a renowned management philosopher).

Other philosophers I enjoy reading are Socrates (through Plato’s dialogues), Bakhtin (I really like his take on subversion through language), Foucault (his earlier works only), Nietzsche, Gadamer, Habermas, Vygotsky and Buddha (though I have yet to incorporate Buddha into my work). I like Elias (power relations) and Mead (symbolic interactionist) and I have started to look at Don Cupitt (Sea of Faith)

My own predisposition is towards anti-realism, however I won’t argue about whether the physical world is our construction or not, preferring instead to concentrate on construction of human reality through social interaction, primarily with the significant symbol of language. Like Rorty I believe we think as we describe, and that reality can change through re-description.
Thanks again for the invitation. I will let you know if I can get along to any of the lectures.

Regards,
Alan.

*This was in response to Alan’s request to know more about me prior to any meeting to discuss philosophy.*

From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Monday, 17 October 2005 11:52
To: s.gardner; 'p.johansen'; 'm.williams'
Subject: What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?

Following on from our meeting on Thursday 13\(^{th}\) October:

This thesis is emergent.
This thesis is interpretative.
This thesis is unconventional.
This thesis is fluid in thought.
This thesis is at the edge of chaos.
This thesis is postmodern.
This thesis is my work of art.

As a work of art it will be interpreted. How it is interpreted is up to the reader. My role as a management philosopher is to create this work of art and elucidate the presuppositions of generally accepted management theory (theory being Plato’s ideal).

Having considered how I wish this study to develop I conclude that Mark is the best person to assist. I therefore request that Mark become my Principal Supervisor immediately. The fact that I meet with Mark every Thursday and he has an intimate knowledge of the work I am doing supports this decision.

This positions Scott and Per as co-supervisors which I believe is more appropriate for how this study is developing.

I will be attending ECU on Wednesday this week to respond to the reviewer’s recommendations. If there are any papers to sign I can sign them then.

Regards,

Alan.

*The eruption continues and I now begin to assert my position – you can take it or leave it, but only I can change it. I request that Mark be my principal supervisor.*
Re: What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world
From: Scott Gardner
Sent: Monday, 17 October 2005 12:22
To: Byrne, Alan
Cc: p.johansen; m.williams
Subject: Re: What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?

Hi Alan

No problem- as discussed.

You can call in around 3.00pm Wed or Thursday,- just advise whichever suits.
We can do the paperwork then.
cheers
Scott

From: Mark WILLIAMS
Sent: Tuesday, 18 October 2005 10:43
To: Byrne, Alan
Subject: RE: What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?

Beautifully said Alan - lyrical, unapologetic, wise, sincere, transformative, opening cracks of freedom in language games.

Warm regards, Mark

From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Tue 18/10/2005 5:14 AM
To: Mark WILLIAMS
Subject: FW: Lectures in Philosophy

Hi Mark,

I am meeting with Scott at 3pm on Wednesday to sign the papers – perhaps you should be there as well?

I have attached an e-mail from Alan Tapper and an article he sent me on moral philosophy. I will be meeting with both him and David Ryan at Joondalup campus next week –at a time yet to be determined. Would you be interested in attending?

If you are around I will be at Churchlands from about 10.30am Wednesday 19.

Regards,
Alan.
From: Mark WILLIAMS
Sent: Tuesday, 18 October 2005 12:16
To: Byrne, Alan
Subject: RE: Lectures in Philosophy

Apologies Alan - I have meetings on and off campus all Wednesday! - chock-a-block. Probably a good thing as I think it best if you see Scott by yourself and leave on a quiet note.

Delighted to drive up to JO and see the people with you - let's use a Uni car.

Warm regards, Mark
2.8 RESPONSE TO REVIEWERS COMMENTS

I responded to the reviewers comments in October 2005 by which time my principal supervisor had changed from Dr. Scott Gardner to Dr. Mark Williams in recognition of the direction my study was taking, being firmly in the research area of autoethnography.

2.8.1 BEING LEFT OUT OF THE CONVERSATION: COPING WITH BEING MARGINALISED. A MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHER’S POSTMODERN PRAGMATIC EXPEDITION

2.8.1.1 THE PROPOSAL

I presented my research proposal on Friday September 9 2005. I used Microsoft PowerPoint to placate the audience. It is not my preferred presentation mode. The audience sat around an oval table and I was positioned at the front, surrounded by a laptop, projector and white screen. The room had to be darkened to allow the people sitting at the back to see. Given the close confines of the room I was unable to walk around, nor gesticulate, both natural courses of action for me while presenting. So I was forced to sit for the whole presentation which detracted from how I wanted to deliver this research proposal. Nevertheless the proposal was well received, and will be included in my thesis (at least one benefit of having it on PowerPoint). The reason I comment on the proposal is to make the reader aware that my preferred presentation style is to interact with the people present. This action is consistent with my thesis which privileges social interaction between humans. The ubiquitous PowerPoint represents a move away from such interaction, a move which I see more and more pervasive in the modern day workplace, where employees are bolted into position to interact primarily with their computers. It is my opinion that increasingly humans are enslaved by computer technology.

2.8.1.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

I wish to recognise the efforts of my two reviewers, Dr. Paul Jackson and Dr. Llandis Barratt-Pugh both of the Edith Cowan Faculty of Business and Law. Their comments and recommendations were much appreciated and this paper is the result of their guidance.

Their recommendations (taken jointly) are as follows:
1. Rationalise the scope of the research questions;
2. Improve validation of data and methods of triangulation or reduce the claims;
3. Describe more thoroughly the auto-ethnographic method;
4. Read more on power relations (Nietzsche, Foucault);
5. Focus on more specific research questions from the start of the study;
6. Provide a more detailed account of the ethical and logistic timetable for the research (who, why, when and how) with at least a broad over view of the potential analysis process. Interrogation of the self needs just the same framework of proposed interrogation.
2.8.1.3 ACTIONS

I have changed the title of the thesis, making it more specific and more focused, whilst nevertheless incorporating the research to date. The previous thesis title was: “What causes an Organisation to be what it is and to become what it will be: A postmodern, pragmatic, heuristic, reflexive expedition”. The current thesis title is: “Being left out of the conversation: Coping with being marginalised. A management philosopher’s postmodern pragmatic expedition”

This title change occurred following much discussion at the ECU colloquium I attend each week, under the guidance of Dr. Mark Williams. With my PhD colleagues I was given the space to come to a greater understanding of what it was I really wanted to discover on my voyage. It led me to produce the following thesis framework, which led to the heuristic insight, reflected in the title.

- Conceptually analyse what causes organisations to be. This conceptual analysis will occur through dialogue (how Socrates believes we achieve insight) both with colleagues and written text;
- Include within this analysis marginalisation;
- Seek to understand my own marginalisation within these contexts;
- Universalise this study through a drama, story, narrative –whatever emerges.

The research questions in the proposal reflected an overview of the conceptual analysis. The main research question was the title itself, followed by a number of sub-questions which highlighted the development of a conceptual model. The research questions are not posed with the intention of providing a definitive ‘real’ answer that can be used, rather the answers will enable us to understand marginalisation better. The main philosophical questions posed are:

“What causes organisations to be what they are?”
“How does being excluded from the conversation cause marginalisation?”
“How do you cope with being marginalised?”

I believe the research questions are focused and that once the philosophical position adopted by the author is understood, the scope is manageable.

I have included in this paper a substantial section on the autoethnographic research method. This follows exhaustive questioning and pronouncements on the validity and reliability of such research. As I am both researcher and research subject, I have also attached an academic autobiography to establish my credentials and my ability to carry out such research. This will form part of the interrogation of the self, referred to in the recommendations. My hope is that these personal narrative reflexive research types will eventually gain more widespread acceptance in the academic community, negating the necessity to continually defend and support these research methodologies against more established research types.

Regarding the validation of the data, this has been included in the support of autoethnography under the heading ‘Triangulation’.

With reference to the further reading, I will be, as indicated in the proposal covering Fairclough, Foucault and others in relation to power. I do not believe there is a need to add anything further in the proposal.
To belay any confusion I have provided a signpost that sets out what you can expect as you encounter this thesis.

2.8.1.4 SIGNPOSTS

I now believe it necessary to provide signposts to my thesis, which will allow the reader easier access, to ‘paint by numbers’ as it were.

This study will be like throwing a brick through the window of convention. My intention is not to make the reader comfortable, or entertained, but to highlight and question the presuppositions of mainstream management theory and to expose, through this account of my own experience, the enslavement of people through official ideologies. I wish to illuminate/ bring to the fore one aspect of enslavement, namely everyday marginalisation by being “left out of the conversation”.

I will offer my opinions in this study, some of which will be generalisations based on my own experience. If you believe that all such opinions should be researched, triangulated and referenced in a positivistically objective manner you will be disappointed. This is not an objective study, it is my voyage of discovery and my thoughts on the journey. Reflecting this process, the research methodology is interpretative and subjective. Autoethnography demands that I jettison my preconceived ideas of what is a valid research methodology and embrace the concept that everyday experience of ordinary people can open spaces in my thinking not previously accessible.

If you, as a reader, don’t embrace my research approach you will find fault at every turn in this thesis and through such critical lenses you will find it difficult to relate to the study. It will not resonate with you, or persuade you.

Narcissism, self-obsession and claims of lack of validity by a negative reader are all poison tipped arrows directed at this type of study. Rather than try to provide an antidote I catalyse the poison to applaud the self as both the object and subject of the study within the framework of autoethnography. I welcome postmodern heuristic inquiry as able to provide eureka moments of self-discovery. I do not seek to make excuses for this research type. I unapologetically promote autoethnography as a research method.

I am not dogmatic in my use of this research method. Being a postmodern pragmatist I doubt everything but preclude nothing. All research methods are good if they work for you and they expand our understanding of our existence. Whether they are from a realist or anti-realist perspective I would acknowledge their validity for those that they make sense to. Similarly I expect the same openness of thought from the reader of my thesis.

There will be sections of this study which may bore you, certainly not entertain you throughout. Bear with them, they are an important part of my development of the thesis topic and an essential part of my voyage. I will make little effort to hide my own development in this process, giving you insight you would not gauge from a sanitised study. I am not writing in any particular style, though my preference is for lyrical language. The writing styles will match my moods at the time of writing and my
development as I continue on my voyage. I set no preconditions upon myself in this regard. I am free to choose.

The presentation is no different from what it is I want to understand. I will not be enslaved by conventional ideologies, in this sense I hope you will get some resonance with the freestyle and unwillingness to be constrained. At times this may lead you to conclude that there is not enough formal structure, not enough objectivity, not enough of what is familiar and expected. If so, I sincerely urge you to open yourself to new descriptions.

2.8.1.5 ACADEMIC AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I acknowledge that as a research method, autoethnography is on the boundaries of being a generally accepted research practice. In recognition of this I believe it is necessary, and indeed it was commented upon by my proposal reviewers, to establish my own credentials as I am both the subject and object of the research. I have signposted my philosophical position as a postmodern pragmatist, which prima facie contradicts my historical education and work experience. I take the view that reality is socially constructed through human relationship. Relationship or human interaction is the key to human identity and how we are. So how did I get to be here?

I completed a Bachelor of Commerce Degree in University College Dublin where my favourite subjects were Industrial Relations, Personnel Management and Administrative Science. I was particularly interested in worker democracy highlighted by the UK Bullock Report, and organisational design. However the feeling amongst students was that the ‘real’ jobs were in accounting, finance and information technology, if you could not hack it in these professions you ended up in personnel management or teaching. And so I went into the finance industry and almost at once noticed the vast difference in what I had learnt in University and how organisations actually worked. Maybe I was an idealist but from early on I found it difficult to stomach the politics people played in their relationships with each other and the seeming blindness of management to their unending hypocrisy in the way they treated their staff. However you get on with things, as you do. I moved into the information technology industry finding that computers were easier to interact with than many people I worked with and studied computer programming (COBOL). I became involved in technical support which exposed me to salesmen. Their lack of integrity and professionalism once again highlighted the fact that nothing but experience can prepare you for how organisations actually work.

I decided to move back into the finance industry and began studying for exams leading to membership of the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators. These studies were very functional with little room for philosophical or theoretical discussion. You learnt formulae and systems analysis and legislation and applied what you learnt. The value of people in this context was simply to perform as required within a whole system, much like the proverbial cog in the machine. Within the finance industry I continued to find it hard to understand why senior management treated their staff the way they did. The fear factor was very evident and many ruled by virtue of the fact that they occupied a senior position in the hierarchy. The more ruthless and less humane they were the more respect they seemed to command.
In 1989 my family and I decided to leave Ireland and emigrate to Australia, believing that the grass is always greener on the other side. Of course I sought work in the finance industry, as just prior to leaving I successfully completed my exams and had been admitted as a member of the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators. I commenced work with an Australian public sector organisation as the finance manager and within a year I transferred to the position of Treasury Manager. I took on two diplomas, the Graduate Diploma in Applied Finance and Investment with the Australian Securities Institute and the Graduate Diploma in Treasury Dealing with the Australian Financial Markets Association. Similar to the studies for the Chartered Secretaries these studies were functional allowing you to exercise the required skills to fit into your role.

After completing both diplomas, I began to consider doing the exams for Certified Practising Accountant (CPA). It was at this stage I began to question whether this was what I really wanted to do. It seemed like just one more body of study designed to make you fit in, whilst for most of my working life I felt I had not fit in. In order to sit for the CPA exams I would be required to complete three cross over subjects. I was still not sure what I wanted to study, so I hedged my bets and applied for and was accepted in the Edith Cowan University Master of Business Administration Course. Due to my previous studies I was entitled to switch three subjects. I undertook the three subjects necessary for entry to the CPA student membership. I successfully completed these three units. My next subject choice was to change my direction completely and to set me on the voyage which I remain on today.

Richard McKenna, senior lecturer in the faculty of business and law at ECU, had the courage to defy conventional wisdom and expose students to Professor Ralph Stacey (1996) under the course title of Strategic Planning, delivered by Dr. Per Johansen. Suddenly I found a kindred spirit who questioned the assumptions of senior management and their ability to predict the future and guide the organisation towards their goals. The unit openly sought to provoke conversation on whether you could in fact plan for the future. For me it was the seemingly irreverent content of the course and its questioning of authority that appealed. It opened my eyes to the fact that there was another side that questioned whether everything was as it seemed to be. I began to investigate alternative organisational structures, more organic based and more in tune with the reality of being human. It seemed particularly important to me that the language you used influenced the way people think. I read Lissack’s articles on the use of metaphor (M. Lissack & Roos, 2000; M. R. Lissack, 1997). This was complemented and expanded upon by Morgan who also offered new ideas on organisation structures similar to those found in nature and wrote about the organisation as a psychic prison (Morgan, 1997).

These readings began to inform my numerous case studies, as I continued to take on every subject connected to strategic planning (this is the area I specialised in). My research assignments concentrated on the organisation I was working in, looking at for example the importance of conflict in decision making and moving from a machine bureaucracy to a living system. I also undertook the unit Organisational Behaviour, which was a challenge because the research assignments took on a much more emotional and relationship perspective. It was not as safe as being an observer looking in and analysing as it involved in-depth discussion with some employees about their work experiences and as such incorporated much emotion and messiness. However it
made sense that this was more real than the other assignments which examined the organisation from a more detached viewpoint.

When I finally completed the MBA, I believed that I had much to offer in the area of strategic planning and that I had opened up my own thinking to incorporate many new ways of viewing an organisation. Fortuitously a job for strategic planning at middle management level was created and applications invited in my organisation. I jumped at the opportunity. However the position went to an external candidate. Once again I considered the option of CPA and this time filled in the application, obtaining the recommendation of two referees. But I could not send it in. It was not me.

I wanted to learn more about the complexity sciences. So I decided to take one year off any formal study, and read. I hoped to form the genesis of a research proposal for a PhD. If I could not work in the area I was passionate about, perhaps I could lecture in it. It was a difficult decision to make due to the fear that I would waste a year. Every day during the week, at lunch time, I would go to the park with my books and note pad and scribble down the most relevant points. This was complemented by additional reading on the weekend.

The first areas I looked at were uncertainty and the principles of the science of complexity. I began to read Gleick’s book on chaos and the concept of the butterfly effect and sensitivity to initial conditions (Gleick, 1998). I investigated the idea of self-organisation by reading books by Cohen and Waldrop (Cohen & Stewart, 1994; Waldrop, 1994). I also started to take an interest in Physics and Quantum Physics as a whole new world opened up for me. I read books on the theory of relativity (Bodanis, 2001), quantum physics (Gribbin, 1990) and the laws of thermodynamics (Lightman, 2000). These introduced me to the idea of the interconnectivity of everything, how unpredictable the future is and how many things are not what they seem.

These ideas of interconnectivity took me to the work of Capra and his systems view of the world, systems within systems all interconnected in a vast network (Capra, 1983, 1997, 2002). Capra also had great appeal as he vilified the traditional approached to management with their underlying Cartesian and Newtonian type thinking typified by scientific management principles and reductionism which view the organisation as a machine. Capra also critiqued Darwin and the idea of competition and survival of the fittest. I had previously had only a superficial knowledge of evolution.

However I now wanted to learn more and was particularly interested in the levels of cooperation that Capra stated existed within living systems to enable them to survive. I read Dennet’s account of Darwin (Dennett, 1996), and then examined how Darwin’s thinking had led to neo-darwinism and social-darwinism as humans sought to understand how they had evolved. I was particularly interested in symbiotics which sought to understand evolution as a cooperative process between life forms (Margulis & Dolan, 2002). Lovelock put forward Gaia theory which views planet earth as a self-regulating living entity (Lovelock, 1987, 1990). Lovelocks view is that all living entities on planet earth are interconnected and that humans intimately influence the planet by their action or inaction. Once again co-operation is a key. I then looked more specifically at co-operation between humans through the work of Axelrod, which examines the evolution of co-operation (Axelrod, 1990, 1997). Axelrod believes that co-operation comes from the nature of our interaction with each other. Nicholson (2000)
is an evolutionary psychologist and believes that co-operation is part of our instinct, hard wired into human beings over long time frames.

This evolutionary perspective I found fascinating and in particular the discussion between competition and cooperation. I believed that there was, as Capra pointed out, an imbalance. There is too much emphasis on competition, but as human beings we cannot survive without cooperation. So I decided that my research proposal would have to be on the co-operation amongst people in organisations. I felt we had much to learn from our history and from other living entities. The proposal was to be from an evolutionary perspective.

I completed the necessary application forms and with help from my supervisors, Dr. Scott Gardner and Dr. Per Johansen, both of the faculty of business and law at ECU, submitted an initial research proposal titled “Co-operation Amongst People in Organisations: An Evolutionary Perspective”. The research was to be carried out in my organisation looking at co-operation between my organisation and others in the same industry. I had also located an industrial network in Kalundborg, Denmark which was self sustainable and had evolved due to the symbiotic nature of the relationship between the various industries within the network. Thanks to a contact in Denmark I had made the necessary contacts within the industrial park. I wanted to combine the results of what enabled the co-operation in both studies to develop a conceptual model of co-operation.

The proposal was successful and I was admitted as a PhD student.

Following initial discussions with my supervisors I began to see how difficult it was going to be to communicate with people in Denmark. I also now needed to complete a more detailed research proposal which would form the basis of the doctoral thesis and which required approval by the University. My supervisors advised that my initial proposal would have to be re-worked within a given structure to be approved.

I began by examining more closely the network idea, and in particular social networks, and how these networks promoted co-operation. I read articles by Snowden (Snowden, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2000d, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c, 2002a, 2002b, 2003; Snowden & Kurtz, 2003) and was taken with the applicability of his proposals, in particular his suggestions on how an organisation could identify social networks and encourage them. Snowden also spoke of story telling and its importance in the creation of knowledge. I exchanged many e-mails with David Snowden and he was extremely helpful. This got me interested in story analysis and I consulted David Boje (Boje, 1991, 2001, 2003). I also exchanged e-mails with David Boje and similarly he was helpful and had developed and used tools for story and narrative analysis.

I had started to focus more on the practicalities of how people co-operate and arrived at the conclusion that obviously it was through verbal communication. I once again went to the work of Stacey and in particular his work on knowledge creation (Stacey, 2001). This led me to read similar works by his colleagues all of which were from the perspective of the Complex Responsive Process of Relating (Fonseca, 2002; D. Griffin, 2002; Shaw, 2002; Stacey, 2003c; Stacey et al., 2002; Streatfield, 2001). Although difficult to tie together at first, the premise that it was through human interaction in the
form of conversation in the living present that meaning and knowledge creation took place made sense to me.

Certainly it would prove more difficult to research what Stacey was proposing as opposed to Snowden. The reason was that Snowden actively works in the commercial environment and must therefore satisfy the demands of management which have to make use of whatever is proposed. Stacey however states that there is nothing that can be applied or used, nor is there an intended outcome from the complex responsive processes of relating. Initially I decided that to satisfy the research requirements I would have to propose a mix of the two, perhaps looking at Stacey but recommending options from Snowden to push along what Stacey believes cannot be pushed along, knowledge emerging from human interaction. I struggled with a few different titles for the study, at one time focusing on the ethical perspectives of Stacey’s work, namely; that management have no control over people’s conversations and have no right to own people’s knowledge; management is not privileged from the perspective of how people will respond to them, they cannot control other people’s responses; and management cannot control or work on knowledge and meaning creation because it is a process not a system.

Despite this initial strong focus, following the receipt of several unpublished articles from Stacey (Stacey, 2003a, 2004; Stacey & Griffin, 2004) I began to form the opinion that, idealistically, I needed to stay true to the theory of complex responsive processes of relating and offer a non-managerialist study, non-managerialist in the sense that it cannot be used by management to achieve some desired outcome through the staff. I realised that many of the corporate programmes I had attended sought to modify employee behaviours or get employees to think or act in a different way, or share senior management values – all of which I was uncomfortable with. Now here was a theory that put academic substance on the reasons for that discomfort.

Although I have worked in middle management for some twenty seven years, I have never thought of myself as the type of manager I work for (with some exceptions). In my desire to understand more about what makes an organisation the way it is I initially settled with Stacey and decided that there was no room for compromise, hardly a postmodern pragmatic stance. I continue to agree with his views on organisations and in reading his books and articles I can also gauge how his own thinking has developed over the years. By being true to Stacey’s theory the type of research required is reflexive self-narrative. Here the self is the research object and subject. I was attracted to this research type as it seemed almost therapeutic and allowed you to narrate your experience and relate stories that normally don’t get told. What a proposition for developing our understanding of organisations – let the people who work in them tell their tale. I was most comfortable with reflexive/autoethnographic research and when I was introduced to Dr. Mark Williams in February 2005 by my supervisor Dr. Scott Gardner, I found someone who was capable of further developing my thought in this area.

Dr. Mark Williams runs a colloquium with PhD students every week. I was invited to join. This experience has been invaluable to me and my development as a PhD candidate. The area of research we discuss is professional action research, however the conversations are wide ranging and there is significant cross fertilisation of similar research methodologies, including autoethnography. For many academics the scientific
method is generally regarded as the only legitimate approach to systematic inquiry or research. However in autoethnography I have discovered a research methodology which makes sense to me, and legitimises what I have to say. Dr. Williams helped me to find my authorial voice, and in the process imbued me with a desire to become a management philosopher. It was exposure, for the first time, to philosophy that opened up new spaces in my thinking. It allowed me to develop a deeper understanding of management theory and to question Prof. Stacey’s complex responsive processes of relating theory.

It was this experience, with it’s exposure to such great minds as Socrates, Plato, Nietzsche, Vygotsky, Foucault, Mead, Rorty, Habermas, Gadamer and Bakhtin, to name only some, that has forged the emergence of the current study and situated me as a postmodern pragmatist.

To get to this point has created much personal angst, self-analysis and questioning. But is that not what real change is all about? To be comfortable is to maintain the status quo, to remain unchallenged until, according to the second law of thermodynamics, entropy sets in. This study is emergent, I do not know where it will end up. The joy is in the voyage.

2.8.1.6 SUPPORTING AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

As a post-modern pragmatic anti-realist I accept that there are many different realities. With human interaction as the fuel, language provides the spark that ignites our reality. This is my position, it is where ‘I am coming from’ in this study. If you appreciate this, what follows will make more sense to you.

There are changes in thought contained within this section, as compared to the original research proposal, which I want to bring to your attention, for example I will be the sole data source. Whilst I do not intend to specifically interview any staff, I will reflect on our interactions through conversations be they legitimate or illegitimate.

I struggled with whether to call this section a defence or a support of my research methodology. I had not considered either until I received feedback on my research proposal presentation which ostensibly is represented by everything else with the exception of this section. The feedback received indicated that what I had included on reflexivity and heuristic inquiry remained insufficient to justify my choice to others. Having reflected upon this feedback I acknowledge that stubbornly I expected that the research methodology proposed would win immediate acceptance and applause all round.

I wish to make it clear that I do not wish to belittle nor denigrate other forms of research. I merely want to support a research method that makes sense to me. So I offer the following in support of my research choice. I have concentrated on autoethnography, as the main points of concern equally apply to heuristic inquiry. I will purposefully use extensive quotations to support autoethnography in the belief that quotes from publications of undoubted reputation and source will persuade you, the reader.
Postmodernism raises doubts about privileging any one method of research (Richardson, 2000a). I use the following idiom ‘variety is the spice of life’ to bring to bright consciousness the description that we should embrace all forms of research to inform our learning and appreciation of the work of art that is each of us. Only through embracing our difference can we hope to engage in the dance of wisdom. Dominating through thought is a dogmatism best suited to a master/slave relationship.

I want to reflect on my experiences to understand my work life; to discover how it came to be what it is.

From a philosophical perspective this is both an ontological and epistemological study, as I seek to understand my own being through social interaction. This marriage of ontology and epistemology is expressed wonderfully in the following extract from a paper by Ann Cunliffe:

“Within mainstream social science, ontology and epistemology are separated because social reality consists of phenomena external to participants and therefore how we come to know and theorise our world is separate from our experience of it. Representation is unproblematic because researchers can observe reality, identify causality, develop truthful, objective, and empirically testable theories and explanatory models which then form a basis for action. By following this method, we can develop confident knowledge…and experience a sense of ontological and epistemological security because we know what we know and who we are. Reflexivity ‘unsettles’ representation by suggesting that we are constantly constructing meaning and social realities as we interact with others and talk about our experience. We therefore cannot separate ontology and epistemology” (Cunliffe, Aug 2003 p. 985).

This quote cries for a different approach to research if you believe that reality is socially constructed.

The study will be introspective – how can you reflect on your experiences otherwise? Because it is introspective it will be unique. The research will be in my voice. I am not standing outside of the research subject. There is no object-subject distinction, no Cartesian dualism. I merely wish to reflect on how it is that the organisation I have worked in for sixteen years has become what it is, and in so doing comprehend my own marginalisation. This study will confront dominant forms of representation and power. Through my narration you will be brought into spaces you have not been, giving you ‘food for thought’ and an enhanced description of marginalisation. This is personalised research.

My experience to date supports Holt’s (2003) statement that the use of the self as the only data source is often questioned and criticised as being too self-indulgent and narcissistic. Mainstream/official descriptions of validity, reliability and objectivity are surfaced to critique legitimisation of heuristic inquiry and autoethnography, and consequently these research methods are found wanting. Let’s examine these observations more closely to see if we can construct a different way to describe the legitimisation of autoethnographic/heuristic research.
2.8.1.7 LEGITIMATION

2.8.1.7.1 RIGOUR

Nicholas Holt (2003) was a PhD candidate who wished to have his story published in a respected journal. His choice of research methodology was autoethnographic. In reflecting on Nicholas’s experience it may answer some of your questions on this research method. The first point raised was that of qualitative rigour, in particular the credibility, dependability, and trustworthiness of data.

The reply is that autoethnography demands different criteria for evaluation.

My study is what Ellis & Bochner (2000 p. 744) refer to as an evocative narrative.

“The word evocative contrasts the expressive and dialogic goals of this work with the more traditional orientations of mainstream, representational social science. Usually the author of an evocative narrative writes in the first person, making herself the object of research and thus breaching the conventional separation of researcher and subject...the story often focuses on a single case and thus breaches the traditional concerns of research from generalisation across cases to generalisation within a case...the mode of storytelling is akin to the novel or biography and thus fractures the boundaries that normally separate social science from literature; the accessibility and readability of the text repositions the reader as a coparticipant in dialogue and thus rejects the orthodox view of the reader as a passive receiver of knowledge; the disclosure of hidden details of private life highlights emotional experience and thus challenges the rational actor model of social performance; the narrative text refuses the impulse to abstract and explain, stressing the journey over the destination, and thus eclipses the scientific illusion of control and mastery; and the episodic portrayal of the ebb and flow of relationship experience dramatises the motion of connected lives across the curve of time, and thus resists the standard practice of portraying social life and relationship as a snapshot. Evocative stories activate subjectivity and compel emotional response. They long to be used rather than analysed; to be told and retold rather than theorised and settled; to offer lessons for further conversation rather than undebatable conclusions; and to substitute the companionship of intimate detail for the loneliness of abstracted facts”

Although a lengthy quote, I felt the need to include it in its entirety. There is a wonderful use of language which, when spoken, clearly enunciates the differences with more traditional research methodologies. My own thinking has been influenced by the work of the neo-pragmatist Richard Rorty (1980; Rorty, 1989, 1991, 1998). Rorty’s work compliments the research methodology chosen. Referring to Rorty’s book Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, Ellis & Bochner (2000 p. 747) state

“No strong case could be made that human knowledge was independent of the human mind. All truths were contingent on the describing activities of human beings. No sharp distinctions could be made between facts and values. If you couldn’t eliminate the influence of the observer on the observed, then no theories or findings could ever be completely free of human values. The investigator would always be implicated in the product. So why not observe the observer, focus on turning our observations back on ourselves? And why not write more directly, from the source of your own experience? Narratively.
Poetically. Evocatively. Besides I became a social scientist because I thought it was a way to address deep and troubling questions about how to live a meaningful, useful, and ethical life. Somewhere along the way these questions took a backseat to methodological rigor”

Ellis & Bochner (2000) reaffirm the importance of being exposed to worlds of experience that are unknown to you. The objectives of autoethnography are described thus:

“…to encourage compassion and promote dialogue. Actually I would be pleased if we understood our whole endeavour as a search for better conversation in the face of all the barriers and boundaries that make conversation difficult. The stories we write put us into conversation with ourselves as well as with our readers”

“The usefulness of these stories is their capacity to inspire conversation from the point of view of the readers, who enter from the perspective of their own lives. The narrative rises or falls on its capacity to provoke readers to broaden their horizons, reflect critically on their own experience, enter empathically into worlds of experience different from their own, and actively engage in dialogue regarding the social and moral implications of the different perspectives and standpoints encountered”

(Ellis & Bochner, 2000 p. 748)

So how do you judge the merits of the story, how can you know if it is reliable?

“Is the work honest or dishonest? Does the author take the measure of herself, her limitations, her confusion, ambivalence, mixed feelings? Do you gain a sense of emotional reliability? Do you sense a passage through emotional epiphany to some communicated truth, not resolution per se, but some transformation from an old self to a new one?...does the story enable you to understand and feel the experience it seeks to convey?”

(Ellis & Bochner, 2000 p. 749)

Richardson (2000b p. 937 -938) comments on the strangulation of autoethnographic research by the hands of conventional research analysis

“I strongly disagree, then, with those who claim ethnography should be a ‘science guild,’ a ‘craft’ with ‘tacit rules,’ apprentices, trade ‘secrets,’ and ‘disciplined’, ‘responsible’ journeymen (i.e. professors) who enact rules that check ‘artistic pretensions and excesses’…This medieval vision limits ethnographic exploration, patrols the boundaries of intellectual thought, and aligns qualitative research ideologically with those who would discipline and punish postmodern ideas within social science.”

Stacey & Griffin affirm that the resulting narrative“…must make sense to others, resonate with the experience of others and be persuasive to them.” (Stacey & Griffin, 2005 p. 27)

As can clearly be seen you cannot use traditional methods to examine the rigour of an autoethnographic study. You must approach from a different angle. Richardson has
established her own criteria for reviewing personal narratives and lists five of these criteria as:

1. “Substantive contribution… Does this piece contribute to our understanding of social life?
2. Aesthetic merit… Is the text artistically shaped, satisfying, complex and not boring?
3. Reflexivity. Is the author cognizant of the epistemology of postmodernism? How did the author come to write this text? How was the information gathered? … How has the author’s subjectivity been both a producer and a product of this text? Is there adequate self-awareness and self-exposure for the reader to make judgements about the point of view?
4. Impactfulness. Does this affect me emotionally and-or intellectually? Does it generate new questions, move me to write, move me to try new research practices, or move me to action?
5. Expresses a reality. Does this text embody a fleshed out sense of lived experience?”

(Richardson, 2000b p. 937)

Whilst Richardson concentrates on writing as the method of inquiry (Richardson, 2000b) it is the language she uses that should draw your attention to the different way that Richardson evaluates autoethnographic research.

2.8.1.7.2 TRIANGULATION

Instead of triangulation to validate findings, Richardson proposes that the central imaginary for postmodern texts is the crystal (Richardson, 2000a, 2000b). The different methods used by the researcher in triangulation, interviews, documents etc, “carry the same dominant assumption that there is a fixed point or object that can be triangulated. But in postmodernist mixed-genre texts, we do not triangulate; we crystallise. We recognise that there are far more than three sides by which to approach the world…Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colours, patterns, and arrays, casting off in different directions. What we see depends upon our angle of repose …crystallisation provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know. Ingeniously, we know there is always more to know” (Richardson, 2000a p. 13-14).

2.8.1.7.3 SELF AS THE ONLY DATA SOURCE

Since reflecting on my research proposal I have struggled with the ethical questions raised by inclusion of interviews with staff, which was incorporated into my original proposal. I have conducted interviews for prior research but upon questioning myself I believe this is a more personal voyage of discovery and that I do not wish to interview other staff. I am more content to self-reflect on our interactions together. I have also contemplated the issue of how ethical it is to discuss with other work colleagues their marginalisation or otherwise. These people may not feel marginalised, may never have considered it and indeed may be threatened or upset by the suggestion. Marginalisation is a deeply personal issue and not one open to general discussion. So I have decided that I will be the only data source.
As Holt (2003 p. 14-15) writes “Mistrust of the self as a research vehicle was evidenced by calls for 'empirical' data.” Only having the self as the data source can be unsettling for readers. Qualitative researchers have long been encouraged to question how their personal subjectivity can influence the investigative process. The use of the self as the focus of the research is seen as being problematic. Criticisms of narcissism abound as autoethnography is seen as being too self-indulgent, introspective, and individualised. This may be the case in some autoethnographic studies but not all. Such criticisms may serve to resist change.

Stacey & Griffin (2005) explain that individuals are forming and being formed by the social at the same time, therefore the self does not exist in a vacuum. Rather individual identity emerges from a social process as do collective identities paradoxically, at the same time. Taking a social constructionist, symbolic interactionist view of reality, reflection on the self is also reflection on human social interaction, on relationship. From a postmodern pragmatic perspective it is reflection on language in social interaction. From such a description there are not necessarily narcissistic tendencies as the self is viewed as a social construction, and self-reflexivity is concentrated on human social interaction to discover meaning.

To further explore the self as the sole data source I reviewed the Handbook of Action Research (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). I focused on first, second and third person research/practice. However, in agreement with Stacey & Griffin (2005) I believe that action research differentiates between the individual and the social. In the preface Reason and Bradbury state:

“Structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) allows us to link the individual to social structures so that both are seen to be related as chicken and egg. As in any causal recursive loop, changes in the pattern of interaction can occur through influence either at the more micro, first- and second-person levels, or the more macro, third-person or institutional levels…we suggest that social and organisational realities may be understood to be sources of patterns of interaction between members: in turn, the members’ dispositions and practices are shaped by social and organisational procedures. A structuration perspective therefore offers theoretical support for seeking leverage for desired change at macro levels through intervention at the individual and dyadic or small-group micro levels and vice versa. While we do not naively misunderstand the power of systems as coterminous with that of aggregate of individuals, we do believe in the power of conscious and intentional change which can result from action research work of individual and committed groups.” (Reason & Bradbury, 2001 p. xxvi)

As Stacey & Griffin (2005) explain action research understands the social as a system at one level constructed by individuals at another level. The essential point is that individuals can use the social system in intended ways through action research. There is a dualistic causality

“…in which individual action is caused by individual intention, plus the effects of social systems on them, in what we have called ‘rationalist causality’, while the system of which they are a part operates according to what we have called ‘formative causality’…According to the first causality individuals are free to
choose their action, but according to the latter they are not.” (Stacey & Griffin, 2005 p. 32)

From the perspective of Stacey’s complex responsive processes theory the individual and the social are the same phenomenon. Individuals are forming and being formed by the social at the same time. Through this social interaction individual and collective identities arise at the same time. From this perspective it is not possible to intentionally change an organisational wide patterning of interaction. You can only change your own local interactions from which global patterning will emerge in unknown ways. The research is a personal account of experience of interaction with others. This understanding gives validity to the self as the sole data source.

2.8.1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As a personal study, my self will be the only data source. I no longer require to identify the organisation, nor provide a location. Such detail is irrelevant as the organisation is merely a collection of human beings interacting through language. The focus is on local interaction so location is similarly redundant. The study will concern the examination of conversation as the transformative cause of change in organisations and explore my marginalisation within that context. As I am narrating my personal experience of human interactions, I can only inform my colleagues in general about what I am doing and write about those interactions in a way that does not reveal their identities, but yet continues to present a ‘reliable’ account of what is going on (Stacey & Griffin, 2005). Of course I have to care and nurture for myself in this process (Williams, 2004).

2.8.1.9 SUMMARY

Holt’s (2003) experience was that people who reviewed his study offered comments that would make the autoethnography more realist, enabling the use of more established, acceptable and accessible criteria. There was a noticeable absence of comment on improving the autoethnography presented.

As a postmodernist I agree with Holt’s statement (Holt, 2003 p. 20):

“In postmodernity, it is surely incumbent on the gatekeepers of research to share perspectives on a variety of research methodologies, styles of representation, and evaluative criteria, rather than privilege the authority of dominant viewpoints”

This research is important, is different, exists on the boundaries of ‘acceptable’ research and is in a sense marginalised for standing out from the norm. Holt states

“If autoethnography is intended to confront dominant forms of representation and power in an attempt to reclaim marginalised representational spaces…it is quite ironic that the method itself becomes marginalised by the academic review process” (Holt, 2003 p. 16)

To add to the irony, I have ‘come out’ in this study and declared that I feel marginalised; how appropriate that I came to choose a marginalised research methodology.
The e-mails that follow suggest a change in the title of the thesis. This is not reflected in my application for ethics clearance which represented my work to the point of responding to the reviewer’s comments. It is in my response to the ethics committee that much of what I am discussing in the following e-mails is revealed.

2.9 E-MAILS 24TH OCTOBER 2005 – 5TH DECEMBER 2005

From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Monday, 24 October 2005 10:50
To: s.gardner; ‘p.johansen; ‘m.williams’
Subject: Interesting few days

Hello to all,

I attended a first ever staff conference on Thursday and Friday last week and on Saturday I attended a one day course at the Buddhist centre in Fremantle.

The theme organising our experience of being together at the Staff Conference was ‘Reflection’. This word was much used over the two days, by all speakers. The pattern over the two days was one of welcoming change. It was the attitude of the individual that prevented change from being successful, and it was the individual that could choose to accept change or not. That this message was delivered in every presentation was unmistakable.

There was no questioning of the type of change, merely that the individual values and morals should be consistent with that of the reified ‘organisation’. If you did not believe that the organisation needed you more than you needed the organisation – this was the time to leave.

The language used by the presenters was modernist – cause and effect. You were either a believer or not.

Needless to say philosophically the presuppositions governing such a view of reality (undoubtedly realist) remained unquestioned, and I did not believe that in the context of this conference that bringing this to light was appropriate.

On Saturday I attended a course in the Buddhist centre in Fremantle. This was very interesting, and gave me some insight into Eastern Philosophy. Of most note is the intertwining between religion and philosophy that Western Philosophy has sought to untangle. I’m not sure if there should not be some middle ground.

Basically Buddhism points to the suffering of life on the planet, and the need of life to seek happiness. Two opposites. The way to proceed is to contemplate on questions through meditation – to change how you view reality from being naturally negative to positive – positive meaning to see opportunity.

This change occurs in the mind. I believe it occurs in your language. If you have taken the linguistic turn then how you talk is how you think is how you construct reality (bit
Aristotelian but bear with me). Therefore if you re-describe your suffering, see the opportunity, you cope better with the slave/master relationship. This is exactly what Rorty is saying. If you replace mind with language, this takes on a neo-pragmatic perspective. This leap is not so great, as Buddhism strikes me as a pragmatic philosophy/religion, questioning the transience of being and the idealism of consumerism and capitalism. They believe in compassion and in influencing the happiness of others through your being being happy. This highlights the importance of human interaction, and is a development in Buddhism away from the original concentration on the individual. They also believe in the power of group meditation – another concession to the social.

More fundamentally I am questioning the exclusion of religion from philosophy and believe that if philosophy provides a way of coping through understanding – it must acknowledge the role of religion and embrace it rather than differentiate itself from it. Who is to say that Rorty is correct in his view or not? Does not a realist or anti-realist have faith in what they believe? The postmodern pragmatist believes the truth is what works for you. What works for you should not be approached with any dogmatism – we should embrace difference and accept that nothing is what it seems (or is that being dogmatic?).

The language used in todays organisations marginalises such difference – it is dogmatic and favours those in power. Perhaps this use of power gives fleeting happiness – away from suffering. Those marginalised must deal with their suffering in a different way – through redescription for example.

Examining it from a different western perspective you can see how religion muddies the waters – rationalism and analysis is no longer privileged. Certainly more questions are posed than answered. I look forward to discussing this further with you.

Regards,
Alan.

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From: Mark WILLIAMS
Sent: Monday, 24 October 2005 12:28
To: Byrne, Alan ; Scott GARDNER; Per JOHANSEN
Subject: RE: Interesting few days

Cupitt discusses the shortcomings of Buddhist thinking in "Emptiness and Brightness" but he remains strongly influenced by especially Nagarjuna. I think that you concur with him in the major areas.

It seems to me that your contribution is more than ever important to both the language domains including many language games within ECU and in your company- also of course and more importantly to your primary relationships I think. The patterning of language surrounding us and you are honing in on your incisive changes to idioms etc. I urge you not to sink back into old or hackneyed idiomatic language in all the many forms of language in which you partake. Happiness-freedom is not hard to live, just do a little most days. A bearing and posture of quiet confidence rattles those who would crush happiness-freedom. A ready smile, laugh, joke, and contented relaxed face and walk and movements is important it seems to me.
I've read your latest work. It is top class PhD work. When referring to all thinkers (dead or alive) write in the present tense as if they are still is the conversation - they are through their words. eg Socrates would, I think, agree with this as he questions whatever is presented in ... I've written on your hardcopy - I'll leave it in the plastic box on my door.

Note my injunction to myself to live a happy and contented life through artistic construction of life's happenings through language, modified Buddhist meditation, tantric and hatha yoga, solar radiating into language-conversation-life, and enjoying the language of bodily exercise in a windy natural environment.

PS remember to keep all emails to include in thesis.

Warm regards, Mark

From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Monday, 24 October 2005 12:44
To: 'Mark WILLIAMS'
Subject: RE: Interesting few days

Thanks Mark,

I am wondering if I should incorporate the religious perspective into my studies, or merely acknowledge the presence.

I believe that philosophy, bereft of religion, allows a more reasoned dialogue to occur. With the inclusion of religion nothing can be questioned as faith rather than reason is privileged. If you privilege faith then everything can have relevance and you can question nothing – other than perhaps the dogmatism of the individual religions. From a management philosophers perspective I feel that reasoning is essential.

I have thought about the religious context, particularly after Saturday, and I can see it can lead you to a nihilistic view.

What do you think?

Alan
Hi Mark,

Further to my last e-mail I have given some more time to what was irritating my thoughts.

Religion is based on faith – each religion seemingly believing that they have the answer. What troubled me about the session I attended on Saturday was the evangelical approach of ‘pushing’ a single message as the ‘answer’. I prefer the application of reason, as with most of the philosophical thinkers – reason meaning dealing with questions of humanity, with questions of life – what is, not what might be.

It comes to reason Vs faith – I now believe that the western tradition of separating the two is correct, philosophy should be separated from religion. By mixing the two any answer is valid – you either have faith or you don’t. Reason is absent in the final analysis therefore how can you continue a meaningful dialogue, in say a Socratic way, if you are confronted by faith as the answer?

This argument has given me some angst as contemplating on these issues is quite difficult. I propose in my study to discuss the issue briefly to let the reader know that I support the split between religion and philosophy. Religion is more constrained in its thinking, philosophy allows for freedom of thought – as pointed out to me by wife, Ana in discussion with her. It is a deep statement only surfaced after much dialogue.

Regards,

Alan.

This was another turning point in my thinking. I seriously questioned the relevancy of what I was doing in my PhD. I was saying to myself – so what? The real problem was that I was trying to think either religiously or reasonably, or be a realist, non-realist or a pragmatist, neo-pragmatist etc. etc.. I was trying to categorise myself and had been since the beginning of my voyage. What writing style was I going to use, what voice was I going to write in? I was now questioning those categories.
From: Mark WILLIAMS  
Sent: Wednesday, 26 October 2005 10:31  
To: Byrne, Alan  
Subject: RE: Interesting few days

Yes, I concur with your position.

We are going to go through a downsizing in the MIS School. I need your advice. The VC award application is crucial.

Can you write a short note on the importance of the weekly doctoral colloquium and my involvement?

Regards, Mark

It did not occur to me at this time that Mark may be caught up in this downsizing, however I would do whatever was requested to lessen the possibility. I believed I needed Mark on board to finish this voyage.

From: Mark WILLIAMS  
Sent: Sat 29/10/2005 3:39 AM  
To: Byrne_A and others  
Subject: I need comments re the colloquium  

Dear all  
Thank you for your help so far in contributing to my application for the VC's research supervisor of the year award.  
It would help if you could write a few sentences answering the following:

1. How has our doctoral colloquium helped you, if at all, as a researcher and/or research student?[Alan Byrne]

   · [Alan Byrne] Provides a forum for contact and discussion with other PhD students, allowing ‘sounding out’ of concepts with critical analysis;

   · Provides an education in the area of philosophy, under the tutorship/mentorship of Dr. Mark Williams, which allows for questioning of underlying theories and assumptions related to my research;

2. How has my role as Chair helped you, if at all, as a researcher and/or research student?

   · [Alan Byrne] Mark provides a structure to the colloquium which ensures the participation of all candidates. Through his obvious enthusiasm students feel enabled to join the conversation;

   · Mark shows great interest in each student’s contribution. This provides confidence and assists the student in finding their authorial voice.
Mark has a great love and knowledge of philosophy and interpretative research methodologies. He imparts this information to students with infectious good will.

3. Do you think the doctoral colloquium is a good thing for ECU and the Faculty of Business and Law? Why?

[Alan Byrne] ECU should embrace the idea of the doctoral colloquium. It allows for contact between lecturers, students and guests in an informal mutually beneficial environment. The informality is disguised by the soft approach towards structuring the colloquium to ensure that each person gives and receives feedback. Particularly for PhD candidates such interaction is invaluable to maintaining progress and motivation.

Warn regards, Mark

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From: Mark WILLIAMS  
Sent: Sunday, 30 October 2005 22:31  
To: Byrne, Alan ; Jack Whitehead  
Subject: VC's award final draft

Jack and Alan

In my application for the VC's research Higher Degree Supervisor's Award I have include the following edited conversation based around our email dialogues. I need to submit on Tuesday. I've added a sentence or two of my own words attributed to you to enable the conversation to flow - if you have any reservations please email me and I will change it to suit.

Thanks once again for you collegial support and your friendship.

INCLUDING COMMENTS ON CHANGES MADE TO THE WAY IN WHICH YOU CONDUCT SUPERVISION, THE EXPECTATIONS YOU HAVE OF STUDENT PROGRESS AND LESSONS YOU HAVE LEARNED ALONG THE WAY (up to 3 pages)

In this section I base my discussion on actual email dialogues with an academic peer, Dr Jack Whitehead, and with a present Doctoral candidate Mr Alan Byrne.

Mark: I have come to realise that I can only write significant work if I work in cooperation with significant others. Therefore I would be pleased if you could write another few sentences responding to my following statements which are based around Don Cupitt's last 5 books summarised in his equation: "The expression of the body is the cognition of the world" - expression understood to include the expression of the vocal chords that produce our speech and the expression of the hands and eyes that produce our written words.
Alan: Firstly Mark I applaud this description of 'expression' which includes language, as we have discussed language for us included your appearance, your body language, your tone, your attitude – a better description is 'expression of the body'.

Mark: Yes, and I think just as amazing is the second phrase of the quote and how they are linked. Over the last decade of continuously supervising research and higher degree candidates, I consider that my contribution has been, and is, and will be to provide a space that encourages my candidates to enrich, extend, and transform the boundaries of international higher education language in addition to local domains by what they and I have done, and do now, and will do in every language expression of their and my bodies including speaking, writing, acting out cultural roles, body language, gestures, eye contact, and the like.

Jack: For me, the significance of your work and the work of your students is enriching, extending and transforming the boundaries of international higher education language in addition to your local domains. As I unpack more meanings about the nature of the enrichment, extension and transformations you and your students have influenced I find that I am connecting these meanings with my own. For me the enrichment, extension and transformation of the higher education language and local domains is focused on the generation of living theories of our productive lives. By this I mean that each of your students has been concerned to enquire into their own life, values, learning and productive activity in their professional contexts. They have brought their living theories of their productive lives into the Academy for legitimation and in the process transformed understandings of what counts as originality of mind and critical judgement, extent and merit of their work and matter worth of publication.

Alan: There is much mutual respect in these words. You have the capacity to provide an environment where creative thought flourishes. You are an intellectual gardener who tends his candidate’s spirits, whilst ensuring the weeds do not suffocate their eventual blooming.

Mark: I consider that this enrichment and expansion has and is and will be especially significant in professional and business studies higher education.

Jack: I think it is especially significant in professional and business studies higher education because it is values-based and focuses on forms of accountability in living a human existence that require the making public of explanations for one's educational influence in one's own learning as one seeks to live more fully values that carry hope for the future of humanity and one's own.

Alan: Without question. It takes men and women of courage to stand in front of the official ideology train and bring it to a halt. The more people that stand on the line the more chance the train driver will pay some attention and eventually apply the brakes.

Mark: This extension, "applying the brakes" or carrying "hope for the future of humanity and one’s own", is also evident in other language domains (especially those my candidates and I have engaged in Australia, Britain, America, New Zealand, Berlin, and China) such as systems theory and practice, the Water Authority of WA, organisation behaviour, military planning, information systems practice, information warfare, process management consultancy, secondary education classroom
management, project management institutes, Sri Lankan newly privatised industries, community development (both communities on-line and on-line communities (especially in the Australian Great Southern region)), Australian local government, the building professions, journalism, trade relations, and corporate knowledge management. That said, I consider that my major impact has been, is and will be to provide that space that encourages my candidates to enrich, expand, and transform their own personal language domains - those that occur in their own self-talk, and the language they enact with themselves and with those closest to them.

Jack: I know how important it is to sustain a creative space in which individuals feel free to enrich, expand, and transform their own personal language domains. I see your major influence going further than this. I think you not only sustain a creative space, you also participate in the provision of a critical space, in which individuals have created their own living theories of their human existence and productive lives in ways that carry hope for the future of humanity. I'll extend the draft keynote on Creating living theories of educational influence for a productive life at http://www.jackwhitehead.com/arrkey05dr1.htm to include these points about your work and the work of your students.

Alan: If each of us is our own work of art, then going forth into the world after being enriched by the experiences and interaction between us, can only mean the creation of a conscious brightness with those whom we interact with. Nurturing such works of art to their potential, can make a difference in the world, as these works of art contribute to human interaction and the social construction of a brighter reality.

Mark: Thank you for writing your words to me. As I would like to use them in my application for the Vice Chancellor's Supervisor's Award, I would like a short description of what you consider to be your major achievements and what language you would use to describe the life that you have created.

Mark: I have come to realise that I can embody my values by learning and teaching. To explain my values I use the master and slave (lordship and bondage) relationship in Hegel's dialectic. Perhaps the most significant single element of his project, in echoing a teacher far greater than himself Hegel's parable drives Marx, Nietzsche, late Wittgenstein, Adorno, Habermas, and now the neo-pragmatists anti-realists such as Richard Rorty and Don Cupitt.

Jack: Yes, when the slave overcomes their fear they defy the master and thus become free. If one or both are not destroyed, either the master and slave swap places in a wretched reversal of roles or they freely recognise each other within inter-dependent economic, political, social, and cultural cooperation as equals.

Mark: Nietzsche says the answer is when the master does not need a slave and the slave a master. But it is up to Cupitt to explain that it is only through language (I take it that that indeed is what makes our world – "the expression of the body is the cognition of the world") that we need neither master or slave if we claim maximal freedom for ourselves and grant maximal freedom to others.

Jack: Can one talk of these values in a doctoral thesis and thus join a body of people whose task is to support such endeavours? That is my hope.
Alan: My hope too Mark.

Mark: Yes. But I now constrained by the guidelines to include a reflective evaluation of the application including changes made, expectations, and lessons learnt. The major change in the way I conduct supervision due to this application are to encourage changes in practice and to expect all students to continually write reflective accounts of their professional practice like this application. Lessons and expectation learnt along the way are:

1.. It is important to create meaningful schedules to enable a doctoral thesis to be completed on time. Time management and self direction accompanied by realistic goal setting with regards to writing and research time are essential.
2.. It is important to have a good rapport between the supervisor and the student. I informally use a number of personality indicators such as the Myers Briggs Type Indicator and the Enneagram typology to assist me in this area.
3.. It is essential for the supervisor to be generous and understanding of the wide range of research approaches and writing styles acceptable in the Academy in both mainline and niche areas.
4.. It is not essential for the principal research supervisor to have the same ontology or epistemology for a successful thesis to be completed.
5.. Dr Sellar comments that it is not essential for the supervisor to have detailed knowledge in the content area: "Mark had no direct experience in community technology or information communications systems, but his deep philosophical and academic understanding of the journey a student takes, their needs for mentoring and relationship to the core elements of their work and the need for honest and good advice, far outweighed knowledge of subject matter or content."
6.. It should enable the student to discuss his/her personal problems with the supervisor and the supervisor should be a good listen and caretaker of students.
7.. Dr Wong comments that "persistence and tenacity is something any high level challenge like writing a Doctorate demands. As a supervisor Mark encourages persistence in keeping on track and of vision".

Alan: I guess that in the last contribution you are summing up what people expect to hear.

Mark: Yes but I do not think that I am using such language as a slave. Is it not that in listening to and claiming the freedom to use the language of others, even those in power, that I exhibit the ethic of claiming maximal freedom for myself and granting such to others? Have you noted that this is indeed what I encourage my research students to do in finding their own authorial voices to express their eureka insights about their topics? Such is this application.

Regards, Mark
From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Monday, 31 October 2005 12:53  
To: 'm.williams'  
Subject: FW: One more!  

4. How has this email group helped you, if at all, as a researcher or research student?

· [Alan Byrne] This e-mail group is a very convenient way to communicate with my colleagues, and allows me to discuss issues and keep an on-line journal of where my current thinking is, with responses to such.

· Due to the nature of e-mails they are time and date stamped which provides a structured chronological listing of communications. This is useful in any form of research, but particularly when it is backed up by face-to-face contact with the colloquium members.

Warm regards, Mark

These e-mails have been included to highlight the importance of the Doctoral Colloquium and what it meant to me.

From: Byrne, Alan  
To: David Ryan  
Sent: Monday, October 31, 2005 10:00 AM  
Subject: RE: Meeting next week

Many thanks David, both for the e-mail, with article, and the discussion on Friday. I have commenced reading your handbook on Critical Thinking, commencing at Ch.2 and will get on to doing the exercises.

One of the points you raised on Friday struck me as both very helpful and insightful – that being that I might propose a ‘better way’ for organisations to be. I had not considered this, being more concerned with what an organisation is/is not. This has given me much food for thought and the prospect of describing how I think an organisation should be, is exciting.

By the way, the reason I covered mind-dependent/mind independent reality was to examine the teleologies involved with Kant and Stacey. Stacey is a supporter of George Mead, a symbolic interactionist, and believes that ordinary conversation (verbal being a significant symbol) is the transformative cause of change within ‘organisations’ – this is a mind-dependent reality. The formative and rationalist teleologies put forward by Kant, and remaining in mainstream management thinking, purport that organisations are systems and that management, through goal setting etc, choose how these organisations are and will be – there is some optimal design, if only it could be achieved – mind independent. The mind dependent makes more sense to me.

Again, thank you for your time and input – much appreciated.

Regards,  
Alan.
Dear Alan

Thanks for notes below (refer to e-mail October 31 2005, 10am). One thing that's most important, I think, is to make sure that philosophical ideas (theses) are applied in the most practical way possible, since, despite popular stereotypes of philosophy, philosophy is intensely practical. It strikes me that although 'conversation' is important when in the right context, it is without value unless it leads to decision, and unless decision then leads to action. I do not believe that conversation is transformative in itself. It is only transformative if it leads to decision and then to action. For example, I have been 'campaigning' for a key to get into my office after hours (and for keys to be supplied to all other academics in the office for same) and I have had decisions in favour of being supplied with one by the Programme Director, the Head of School and the Dean, but these decisions have not led to action. Much conversation, as it were, no action. Therefore, no transformation.

I think you are going to have to draw on a number of (1) moral principles, such as the virtue of listening (as per the Benedictine tradition--see the introduction to The Rule of St Benedict: 'Listen with the ear of your heart'), which has a very practical dimension--to listen just is to base decision and action on what you hear--and (2) political principles, such as those which are really at the heart of democratic political culture, such as framing decision-making rules with give all personnel a franchise (so to speak). In other words I suspect that you will have to put forward views at the level of, let's say, business political culture, and show how these constrain the structure of business organisation (in their practical operations).

I won't say more. Please note also that I am a luddite and don't much like communication by email, except for making appointments etc., but that I do like lengthy conversation in coffee shops and like places. Hence you may expect rather brief emails from me in the future but if you want to discuss things in 3D, lengthy conversation in coffee shops or like.

Best wishes
David
Hi David, (as indicated I noted your preference for face-to-face conversation – but bear with me as an e-mail advocate for recording thought)

I read with interest your comments on conversation.

I accept the point you have made regarding action. I guess this is where the postmodern pragmatism comes into play. If you accept that thought is merely language running through our heads, and that we create our realities through description, rather than merely represent reality through language, then (yes I know an if-then conditional proposition) a change in our language, or redescription, is a change in our thinking – which will lead to a change in our decisions and actions. In your case, without knowing the procedures, it seems like someone has been left out of the conversation – the person who actually gives you the access?

Regards,
Alan.

PS. Can you advise where I can get a copy of the solutions for the critical thinking course? I contacted the bookshop in Joondalup and they don’t seem to have one. I note in your course notes that an on-line copy is available on blackboard, but I assume you have to be an enrolled student in the unit to access?

From: David Ryan
Sent: Tuesday, 1 November 2005 11:41
To: Byrne, Alan
Subject: Re: Meeting next week

Nice point. However ‘our realities’ are to be distinguished from ‘reality’ (and our realities need to be brought into line with reality). If you make that distinction, I agree with you. However, theory and practice are easily separated. Hence Sunday Christian businessmen.

Over and out
David

I met with Alan and David, both teachers of philosophy. I was seeking their counsel regarding my own studies in philosophy. Both provided me with excellent resources and advice, once again supporting my view of academics as being generous with themselves to others. I spent more time with David and this time proved invaluable. David is a critical thinker and is not afraid to ask questions. In discussion with him I realised that what I was actually about was finding a better way for people in organisations to be – it was an ethical study. This brought together all the ideas of
cooperative interaction, marginalisation, evolution, social networks etc. At the core was a concept of how I believed organisations could be. This was a major breakthrough in my thinking.

From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Monday, 7 November 2005 14:54
To: 'm.williams'
Subject: Update

Hi Mark,

I began to put pen to paper on the autobiography side and made an important discovery:

I am uncomfortable with the title “Being left out of the conversation: Coping with being marginalised. A management philosopher’s postmodern pragmatic expedition.” It was a response to the reviewers comments and it made sense at the time, however I cannot provide a safe-from-harm context for myself with this title. It would involve addressing head on the marginalisation to which I am referring – I feel discomfort with this, particularly as I am not providing for a right of reply, and I cannot fictionalise the events satisfactorily.

The initial title: “What causes an organisation to be what it is and to become what it will be: A postmodern pragmatic reflexive expedition” may have seemed ambitious, but not when you philosophically assert that it is cooperative interaction with language that is the cause. Other considerations (economics/government regulation etc) are merely different language games. I also had no problem reciting this title. The same cannot be said for the new one. My heart is not in it.

I like the following title, given my new focus of describing how I think organisations could be better places for ordinary people to be:

“What causes an organisation to be and can it be a better place?” A management philosopher’s postmodern pragmatic expedition”.

Whilst I will not discount the aspect of marginalisation, it will be included in the sub-text rather than being the focus of the study.

Regards,
Alan.

This was a significant turn in emphasis. I had tried to write of my marginalisation but found it too difficult to disguise the people and the context as I believed it was necessary to faithfully recount the particular occurrences. My writing became laboured and uneasy. I changed the focus back to what it was before and what made sense to me.
Brilliant - I would advise you to keep writing your professional auto biography and also your autobiography as a scholar.

Cheers, Mark

Will do Mark. Having thought about it overnight I have now modified the title slightly from what it originally was. It now reads:

What causes an organisation to be what it is, and to become what it could be? A management philosopher’s postmodern pragmatic expedition.

Only a difference of one word – from ‘will be’ to ‘could be’. The ‘could be’ is more ethically based; it represents a desire to change organisations to be better places for us to live, to be. It allows me to put in my 10cents worth as to what I believe an organisation could be. It is also a term which is less dogmatic than ‘will be’ and therefore more postmodern, accommodating more views than simply my own (from the perspective of the reader who may not share my understanding).

I have been reading through Derrida – I believe there are similarities between him and Stacey. Stacey is not an advocate of either/or thinking, nor is Derrida. Stacey is a proponent of paradox. It seems to me that this is what Derrida is referring to. The idea of paradox is both/and. It is where something can be both at the same time - good/evil, servant/master etc. With this in mind then what is truth? The either/or thinking assumes there is some objective truth, the paradox assumes there is not. This is consistent with a socially constructed reality through language. Paradox can never be resolved or balanced only endlessly transformed/rearranged/redescribed.

This change from the word ‘will be’ to ‘could be’ represented an ethical awakening in my work. It followed from my discussions with Dr. David Ryan when we teased out what it was I wanted to convey. I wanted to believe that there had to be a better way for us to be in the business world.
Gentlemen,

I have changed the title of my thesis to:

What causes an organisation to be what it is and to become what it could be? An edifying management philosopher’s postmodern pragmatic expedition

In support of my move to edifying philosophy I would like to offer the following quotes taken from Richard Rorty’s book ‘Philosophy and the mirror of nature’ pp 359 – 394

“From the educational, as opposed to the epistemological or the technological point of view, the way things are said is more important than the possession of truths”. This points to Rorty’s postmodern pragmatic view that it is pointless to engage in dialogue with the objective being ‘the truth’, ‘the one real way’. Rorty uses the word edification, replacing the term education. Edification is the project of finding new, better, more interesting, more fruitful ways of speaking.

“Edifying discourse is supposed to be abnormal, to take us out of our old selves by the power of strangeness, to aid us in becoming new beings”. Rorty’s redescription is a way of constructing a reality through a new description. We can grasp this concept in the idiom ‘a new way to see things’.

“For Heidegger, Sartre, and Gadamer, objective inquiry is perfectly possible and frequently actual – the only thing to be said against it is that it provides only some, among many, ways of describing ourselves, and that some of these can hinder the process of edification”. This points to the limitation of our reality created by our lack of vocabulary and resultant inability to redescribe. As in research methodologies, we should welcome the diverse and the different to allow us to ‘see things differently’ (note the use of the word ‘see’ in these idioms. We actually see differently through different language).

“Great systematic philosophers are constructive and offer arguments. Great edifying philosophers are reactive and offer satire, parodies, aphorisms”. Therefore the edifying philosopher listens and questions, keeping the conversation going. My interpretation is that the edifying philosopher is in a way subversive, seeking to question official ideologies, in a sometimes playful way. As an edifying management philosopher I seek to question the ‘taken for grantedness’ of the privileging of a particular way to ‘view the world’ that results in organisations being reified and systems being controlled towards a given goal.

“One way to see edifying philosophy as the love of wisdom is to see it as the attempt to prevent conversation from degenerating into inquiry, into an exchange of views”. This is consistent with what I will term ethical conversation (don’t know if someone else has already coined this phrase). It is about giving everyone a ‘fair go’, not merely stating
your view but welcoming difference and being willing to be changed by it. Our vocabulary can be added to by the experience, allowing us to ‘see things differently’.

“The danger which edifying discourse tries to avert is that some given vocabulary, some way in which people might come to think of themselves, will deceive them into thinking that from now on all discourse could be, or should be, normal discourse”. I interpret this in the business world as meaning the official ideologies and associated role plays which are taken to be normal with illegitimate language being sanctioned, leading to oppression.

“Perhaps philosophy will become purely edifying so that one’s self identification as a philosopher will be purely in terms of the books one reads and discusses, rather than in terms of the problems one wishes to solve”. I would also add in ‘and the conversation one engages in’ prior to the word rather

I see the role of the edifying philosopher to ask questions of people engaged in conversation rather than solve problems hence the focus of Rorty on reaction. Reaction in this sense requires listening and an ethical perspective on relationship. You must respect the people, their diversity, their voice, their being. Edifying philosophers are the facilitator of ‘free flowing conversation’ as espoused by Stacey. Language is the key to unlocking new realities, to freeing up the slave from the concept of the slave/master relationship.

What we understand as the organisation will only improve when we improve our relationships and our interaction as human beings. Is this an ethical project? I believe so.

Alan.

Consistent with a more ethical approach I liked the idea of being seen to be an edifying philosopher, so described by Richard Rorty. I would grant and be granted a ‘fair go’ in my interactions with people. I would legitimately question the presuppositions of management theory and open up conversations. I liked the idea.

From: Mark WILLIAMS
Sent: Tuesday, 22 November 2005 14:59
To: Byrne, Alan; Scott GARDNER; Per JOHANSEN
Subject: RE: Edifying Philosophy.

Thank you Alan. This is brilliant writing.

In a way you are doing a close reading and then a restating or redescribing Rorty's text. Derrida perhaps would want to conduct a bit of deconstruction of Rorty's text. This might be a good idea or we ourselves could get caught in the trap we ponder. That is, we might reify the language of Rorty or Cupitt etc.

I guess that when Rorty writes "to prevent conversation from degenerating into inquiry, into an exchange of views” he means that this degenerate form of inquiry or exchange of views "will deceive them into thinking that from now on all discourse could be, or
should be, normal discourse”. This stagnation of "normal conversation" would thus be a
degenerate form of inquiry and thus unedifying.

Derrida would possibly say that we need to restate and write in new and original ways
and that postmodern close reading is one way forward. You say that "language is the
key to unlocking new realities, to freeing up the slave from the concept of the
slave/master relationship". And we know how difficult it is to play the role of a critical-
thinker-artistic-writer. Can we, in our various slave roles, be part of language as "the
key to unlocking new realities", to free us "from the concept of the slave/master
relationship”?

Perhaps the key is listening as part of language. Giving people, including ourselves, a
fair go usually, for me, means to listen carefully to the expression of the other's body
first, and then giving myself a go to express. The best of postmodern expression listens
by giving a close reading of others' works.

Is Stacey being a bit naive when talking of "free flowing conversation"? Is he caught in
his own "normal conversation".

Regards, Mark

From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Tuesday, 22 November 2005 15:28
To: 'Mark WILLIAMS'
Subject: RE: Edifying Philosophy.

Attachments: RE: Edifying Philosophy.

Like the response Mark, particularly the open-ended questions with no attempt to put
forward an answer – it keeps the conversation going.

Regards,
Alan.

From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Wednesday, 23 November 2005 08:59
To: 'm.williams'
Subject: Evolution

Hi Mark,

I have been considering the early work I engaged in, prior to meeting up with you.

I was very interested in cooperation instead of competition and found an outlet for this
interest in Darwinian evolution. This led me to examining an industrial park in
Denmark where there is a high degree of cooperation between the various groups of
people (let’s call them organisations), and there is little or no waste product which is not
utilised.
With heuristic insights I now reflect that this cooperative interaction is relationship through language. Evolution shows us that people MUST interact; it is part of the human condition.

For this reason I have decided to include a chapter on evolution, with an emphasis on cooperative interaction. This will form part of the understanding of why I privilege the social rather than the individual. Most of the work is already done for this chapter, I only require to source recent studies on the physiological effects on us when we interact socially (many times you have referred to the chemical reactions within each of us).

It seems to me that this evolutionary perspective is consistent with a socially constructed reality, and in particular the importance of language.

Do you concur Dr. Williams?

Regards,
Alan.

I had considered omitting the evolution literature review from this thesis. However it was now beginning to make more sense to leave it in as I reflected on why I was interested in evolution and how it complimented my privileging of the social and cooperative interaction. I would add to the existing work with an emphasis on social evolution and the work of Mead and Elias.

From: Mark WILLIAMS  
Sent: Wednesday, 23 November 2005 15:29  
To: Byrne, Alan  
Subject: RE: Evolution  
Fabulous idea.

I personally would like to hear some speculation on the evolutionary beginnings of language - Cupitt has some good accounts in the Long Legged Fly I think. 
Regards, Mark

From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Thursday, 24 November 2005 11:02  
To: 'm.williams'  
Subject: Discussion  

Hi Mark,

I had an interesting ‘conversation’ yesterday. It ended acrimoniously. I have reflected on the language used and the expression of the bodies.

If we accept that our human interaction, our language constructs reality, then in this instance the reality created for both of us, in our local interaction, was different. The reality created is a consequence of how we interpreted each other’s language, for to do otherwise is to assume that there is a truth in the language itself, almost representational in essence. Therefore is reality an interpretation of description? When we increase our vocabulary it allows us to re-describe, to re-interpret?
What then is interpretation? Is it merely the language running through our heads? If so is it our life experiences through human interaction that creates the language running through our heads?

If this is the case then it would be our life experiences through human interaction that create our realities – our language is the representation, not of a reality, but of an interpreted reality, a reality constructed by social interaction, but a multi-faceted reality which can be different even in the local interactions of two people having a conversation.

I look forward to your insights,
Alan.

Through understanding my own interactions at work I was gaining additional philosophical insights into the concept of reality. This in turn led to greater understanding of my own interactions and so on.

From: Mark WILLIAMS
Sent: Thursday, 24 November 2005 13:06
To: Byrne, Alan
Subject: RE: Discussion

Fascinating vignette.

My first response is to posit that the forthcoming of be-ing in your interaction was and now is retrospectively moulded and shaped into life-worlds by you and by the other. What is now crucial is the language you are part of in the retrospective moulding or remoulding.

I am looking forward to our discussion this afternoon.

Regards, Mark

From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Thursday, 24 November 2005 13:40
To: 'Mark WILLIAMS'
Subject: RE: Discussion
Attachments: RE: Discussion

Thanks Mark,

I am interested in the concept of life-worlds and the idea of remoulding – Is that an interpretation of past life-worlds? – the life-world being created in the living present, temporal rather than spatial.

Further to my earlier e-mail I now ask do we experience the reality we create, or do we perceive it? Perhaps the ‘truth’ is only experienced in our local interactions in the living
present. Once experienced that reality is open to interpretation. In this sense reality continually emerges in our local interactions in the living present. Once experienced it is contained within the language running in our heads, and subject to interpretation. Is our description of reality therefore contextual?

See you between 3.30 and 4pm.
Alan.

Re: Edifying Philosophy.
From: Scott Gardner
Sent: Thursday, 24 November 2005 14:00
To: Byrne, Alan
Cc: m.williams; p.johansen
Subject: Re: Edifying Philosophy.

Hi Alan

Certainly with you on the last point.

I hope Rorty also subscribes to actions that match edifying speech to make organisations and communities uplifting, purposeful places to work. (I have avoided using ‘better’ here). I come back to point that any philosophy applied in the context of institutions or organisations should translate into purposeful action. Surely philosophy should be applied to address, understand, re-conceptualise or solve problems linked to innovation, creativity, knowledge sharing, fair trade and commerce, the ecological time bomb, and the shortcomings of a so-called civilised society. What do you think?

To me thinking about application takes Neo-Pragmatism out of the esoteric realm into the organisational and institutional domain. ie I think you need a focal point for your study which will clearly explain how NP can enlighten and edify the study and design/management/emergence of organisations as a form of life. (See Peter Winch on this point). If you can work with this idea or brief if you like- I would like you and Mark to contribute something to a book I have been asked to put together.

Be sure to check in with Mark for a WIP before the Xmas break.

regards
Scott
Hi Mark,

Following discussion at our Doctoral Colloquium on Thursday I have changed the title of my thesis to:

What causes an organisation to be what it is and to become what it could be?: A philosophical expedition

I will not be constrained in my thesis by fitting into a description of postmodern/pragmatic/edifying/management. I am no longer seeking to be identified with any particular form of philosophy. My thinking will evolve into what it evolves into, I will not be guided towards a preconceived notion of what it should be.

This was highlighted to me yesterday by two points. Firstly I asked the question, that given what I had experienced would not an edifying philosopher have handled it differently – the first sign that I am being constrained/restrained in my thoughts and actions. Secondly the question was raised about the word postmodern in the title of the thesis and if perhaps another description was more relevant. This highlighted for me again a constraint/restraint that could potentially limit the evolution of my thesis.

This thesis will be what it will become. I argue against management thinking which seeks to design a system which will produce their goals. By conforming to the ideal of a particular form of philosophical thinking I believe I am in a sense designing the thesis towards a given goal, that goal being identified with a particular form of philosophical thought. Should my thinking evolve towards, say edifying philosophy, then so be it, but I refuse to identify/categorise it as such. That can be left up to the reader. In this context the thesis reflects the title. I am disclosing what has caused this thesis to be what it is and to become what it could be – it is the result of human interaction through language – our colloquium, my dialogue with others including authors.

I will of course continue to agree/disagree with philosophers who have categorised themselves/been categorised with a form of philosophy, but I will no longer seek to align myself as ‘fitting into’ that category. I will leave it up to others to so categorise my thinking. For me this represents the freedom to fly in open skies without fear of ending up in a cage.

Alan.

The whole series of e-mails prior to this one on the change of title, the edifying philosophy have led to this point. Finally the eruption has subsided. Everything is calm and a sea of ash covers the conventionality and academic expediency related to what you are suppose to do in a PhD. I now realise that I do not have to categorise myself, nor follow any particular methodology or way of being. I merely have to relate my
thoughts on how I believe organisations could be from a philosophical perspective. It is up to you and others to determine how this ‘fits into’ yours and their realities.

From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Monday, 28 November 2005 16:24  
To: 'm.williams'  
Subject: Slave/master

Hi Mark,

I was thinking about the slave/master dialectic with regard to groups of people clustered together in the business world. It seems to me that the dialectic is nourished symbolically, through language symbols: Dress, car park space, office, lunches, overseas trips, the Roles we play. This last point is interesting. I now believe that the roles we play perpetuate the slave/master dialectic – if ‘all the world is a stage, and we are merely players upon it’ then by playing the roles we play we ensure the continuation of the slave/master dialectic.

So do we escape the s/m dialectic by merely changing our role – or is this perpetuating it? Can we abandon the concept of playing a role? Is the concept itself tied into the slave/master dialectic? I believe it is.

Alan.

My abandonment of categorisation has allowed me the freedom to question the whole concept of roles and role playing. From believing that we could engage in a more democratic dialogue by playing a particular role, I am now taking the viewpoint that to play a role is to damage free conversation and its transformational potential.

From: Mark WILLIAMS  
Sent: Monday, 28 November 2005 17:58  
To: Byrne, Alan  
Subject: RE: Slave/master

Yes, I too have considered this playing out of roles as perpetuating master-slave and other hierarchies. And yes also to the idea that the concept itself is tied into the dialectic.

I tentatively think that a way forward might be to examine the idioms, sayings, and stories that run around in our heads and in language - the ones that influence us most. Become aware and then see if we can choose the ones that we tentatively think might lead us somewhere.

Regards, Mark
Hi Mark,

This came to me, a heuristic moment, last night as I was reflecting on recent work:

Mortality is for strangers
Freedom is a lover
Whose embrace dignifies life
Liberation in darkness
Enslavement by light

Alan.

I enjoyed writing this poem, particularly the line ‘Liberation in darkness’. This alluded to my belief that there is no escape from the slave/master dialectic, save when we sleep.

Fabulous - deeply allusive and multi-stranded and weaving interesting new patterns of word play, especially the last line.

You can include this poem in your thesis and relate it to your thesis themes if you wish.

Regards, Mark
Hi Mark,

Time for an update on my philosophical thoughts.

I am now indifferent to many of the philosophical debates concerned with reality. My focus is on relationship reality; the reality we construct between ourselves as we interact through language, primarily through the significant symbol of verbal language. Relationship reality is the reality we construct concerning the humanity of the world we live in. Whether a chair is really there, or whether mountains would exist or not without our description is to a large extent irrelevant to my interests.

The worlds we construct in our relationships with other people are the worlds we live in and experience continually; these are the worlds that are contingent – relationship is self-organising you cannot control it. These worlds are filled with emotion and the messiness of life. How we describe these worlds is how they are – therefore they are multi-faceted, open to interpretation and lived experience.

By privileging relationship, or cooperative interaction, as the creator of reality, it has significant implications for how we consider the concept of organisations. The individual can no longer stand alone as the owner of tacit knowledge, nor can individual group’s control reality, as reality is dependent on with whom we interact. The quality of our interaction together is what is important. I favour ethical interactions, that being without constraining power relations or role playing.

Alan.

Relationship stands out for me as the most important aspect of being a human. How we interact together creates a particular reality, the one in which our emotions are engaged and we either feel happiness or not.

So what is important is how we describe each other in our granting of maximal happiness to ourself and to others.

Alan.
Powerful and rapid insights. I would urge you again to include all the work you have
done so far to arrive at these stages.

How about the idea that Being is what comes to us, Language is how we form Being
into our Life-Worlds, and claiming while granting maximal happiness-contented-
wellness is the guiding ethic? In such language I am rephrasing Cupitt who is
rephrasing a whole host of others (parts of Parminides, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche,
Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Derrida, Rorty). You have your own referents who would
concur in several areas.

"So what is important is how we describe each other in our granting of maximal
happiness to ourself and to others."

Yes . . . and also how we describe ourselves I think . . . and also claiming as well as
granting maximal happiness.

Can I send this out to the rest of the group?

Regards, Mark
2.10 ETHICS CLEARANCE

I then progressed to make an application for ethics clearance, the final intermediary administrative hurdle. I submitted the research proposal, the reviewer’s comments and my response to the reviewers. You should note that little of my thinking in the recent e-mails is reflected in the application, as they were to be part of the main thesis. The Ethics Committee feedback was as follows:

Date: Thu, 8 Dec 2005 10:34:59 +0800
From: "Research Ethics"
Subject: BYRNE
To: <asbyrne>
Cc: "Mark WILLIAMS"

Hi Alan

BYRNE
Being left out of the conversation: Coping with being marginalised. A management philosopher’s postmodern pragmatic expedition

Thank you for your application for ethics approval. The application has been reviewed by members of the Human Research Ethics Committee and they had the following comments:

The research project contains very interesting concepts and appears to be low risk.

Aims
The researcher uses the word “reflexive” here and in Question 9 but the word is not used anywhere else in the application, particularly where the methodology is explained. What does the researcher mean?

Research procedures
The Committee's understanding is that in part the researcher will be researching his interactions with other people from his perspective without interviewing the other parties for their perceptions, but will include observation of other people. On page 19 of 23, he says that he will inform his colleagues in general about what he is doing.

The Committee would like to see a written notice of what the researcher will tell his colleagues. As he is researching his place within the organization, it probably is not applicable for individual participants to be excluded as this would defeat the purpose of the research but his colleagues should have the opportunity to discuss it with him or an independent person.

Please send your response to these points and/or the amended application via email so that I can progress your application.

Regards
Kim
My response to the Ethics Committee was:

Byrne

Reply to points raised by the Ethics Committee

POINT 1  ‘The researcher uses the word “reflexive” here and in Question 9 but the word is not used anywhere else in the application, particularly where the methodology is explained. What does the researcher mean?’

Response: I use the word reflexive in a social science context. The Oxford English Dictionary defines reflexive within this context as ‘Applied to that which turns back upon, or takes account of, itself or a person’s self, especially methods that take into consideration the effect of the personality or presence of the researcher on the investigation’. In this sense this study is reflexive as the researcher is both the object and subject of the study. The researcher is the researched; the observer is the observed. The self is placed within a social context. From such a perspective there is no objective reality; we cannot understand something by standing outside of it and looking in for we are a part of it. To understand our own social interactions with others we must understand ourselves; we must take account of our relationship with others; such accounts are personal. The idea is that the reader engages with the author to open up new spaces in their own thinking, by being able to relate to and being persuaded by the writing of the author, which should resonate with them.

POINT 2  ‘The Committee’s understanding is that in part the researcher will be researching his interactions with other people from his perspective without interviewing the other parties for their perceptions, but will include observation of other people. On page 19 of 23, he says that he will inform his colleagues in general about what he is doing. The Committee would like to see a written notice of what the researcher will tell his colleagues. As he is researching his place within the organisation, it probably is not applicable for individual participants to be excluded as this would defeat the purpose of the research but his colleagues should have the opportunity to discuss it with him or an independent person’

Response: I thank the Committee for these insightful comments. I have struggled with the ethical considerations of this type of research. Since finalising the research proposal I have given considerable thought to how I will present my lived work experiences whilst at the same time protecting and caring for myself and others. To this end I have decided NOT TO identify the organisations I have worked in, nor the people I have worked with.

Instead my work life will be one continuum, stretching over twenty seven years and some eight organisations both government and non-government. My experience will be drawn from the whole of my work life and will be presented as a series of generalised vignettes. This means that the reader will be unable to distinguish which organisation in which country the experience relates to. At the end of the day I carry those experiences with me. They are neither compartmentalised nor indexed. They do not present in
chronological order. My experiences melt into each other to make me who I am. I will relate my work life within this context. Ethically I believe this approach is on terra firma. I felt uncomfortable writing about a specific experience where the other party does not have a right of reply, even where that person is fictionalised, particularly where the interaction has been negative for me.

I must also confess to uneasiness with the changed title ‘Being left out of the conversation: Coping with being marginalised. A management philosopher’s postmodern pragmatic expedition’. It was a response to the reviewer’s comments and it made sense at the time, however I do not believe I can provide a safe-from-harm context for myself with this title. It would have involved addressing head on the marginalisation to which I am referring. I feel discomfort with this, particularly as I am not providing for a right of reply, and I cannot fictionalise the events satisfactorily.

The initial title, “What causes an organisation to be what it is and to become what it will be: A postmodern pragmatic heuristic reflexive expedition” may have seemed ambitious, but not when you philosophically assert that it is cooperative interaction with language that is the cause. Other considerations (economics/government regulation etc) are merely different language games. I also had no problem reciting this title. The same cannot be said of the new one. My heart is not in it.

My preference is now for the following title, “What causes an organisation to be what it is, and to become what it could be? A philosophical expedition”. This title reflects the ethical nature of this study which is to investigate another way of understanding organisations and a better way for those organisations to be.

As part of my self-discovery and development I intend to include e-mails received from various sources related to the study. To include these e-mails I have drafted the following to solicit the permission of those parties involved:

Dear <Name>

My name is Alan Byrne and I am a PhD student at Edith Cowan University (ECU) in Western Australia. Should you wish to find out more information regarding ECU you can do so at www.ecu.edu.au

Between <Date> and <Date> we exchanged e-mails related to my current studies. Your comments are most useful and contributed to the development of my own thinking. The current title of my thesis is “What causes an organisation to be what it is, and to become what it could be. A philosophical expedition”.

I wish to include our e-mails, and attachments, in the main text of my thesis to outline for the reader the progression in my own thinking, occasioned by my interaction with both yourself and others. I respectfully seek your permission to publish our e-mail correspondence in my thesis. Please note that your e-mails will be included in chronological order with other e-mails from people that have similarly assisted me with their input and thinking on this voyage of discovery. Where significant to my thought, any e-mail attachments will be included in the appendices.
Please indicate your agreement or otherwise by return e-mail. I am happy to discuss any issues you may have. All electronic e-mails received by me are kept on a firewall protected server with local access restricted by password. However as you will be aware all e-mails were communicated via the Internet which is not a secured communication mode.

If you have any questions or concerns I can be contacted via e-mail

My principal supervisor is Dr. Mark Williams who can be contacted via e-mail

If you wish to speak to an independent person regarding any concerns you may contact the Research Ethics Officer, Kim Gifkins via e-mail

Kind Regards,

Alan Byrne

These are the only permissions I sought in this study. Because of the changes outlined above I no longer saw any reason to inform my work colleagues, even in a general sense, of what I was doing. My experiences have accumulated over twenty seven years and my interactions over that time frame have been with many different people, from different companies, in different countries. My vignettes will be generalised and primarily will focus on my learning experiences as a consequence of various interactions. I will not even include any fictionalised characters.

This approach is consistent with the autoethnographic methodology which privileges the self as the data source. My research proposal goes into some depth explaining the autoethnographic research methodology.

Following receipt of this explanation I received ethics clearance. The permission e-mail was sent out to each person included in the e-mails in this thesis and I was greatly relieved that each person gave me their unequivocal support.
Gentlemen,

I have been considering the difficulty in getting management to accept the concepts of contingency and self-organisation – as I now move onto what an organisation could be.

Making sense of the world we live in is largely an effort to control it. If we can establish cause and effect, linear thinking, we can maintain control. We can fix whatever went wrong so it does not happen again. More complex relationships require ever increasingly complicated analyses of cause and effect, but nevertheless the result is even more certainty and less anxiety as we strive to deal with the known and eliminate the unknown. I take the known to be the external reality which language represents.

To let go of this ideal of control is extremely difficult, for it is to admit that no matter what we do that our very existence is contingent – things just happen. We are not necessarily rewarded for our efforts and endeavour, life is not always fair, good guys don’t always win and ethical people don’t always prevail – but we continue to espouse these ideals. So for example we can successfully dump radio active fuel for up to 250,000 years, with no possibility of leakage.

The scientific method provides comfort, certainty and less anxiety because we are dealing with the known. It can lead to denial if the unexpected arises with no known reason. Reason in this sense is to seek cause – what is the reason?

So dealing with the unknown can create anxiety. It is therefore difficult to gain acceptance that reality is not out there already, that we socially construct it through our relationships and that it is self-organising and contingent. Perhaps the best we can hope for is that we open a window of understanding through which some new language will shine through.

Scientific reasoning is how we cope with the uncertainty of life. It is a security blanket that brings us closer and closer to the reality that evades our limited understanding of it. Do all forms of reality exist separate to human relationships? – I don’t think so. We need to privilege relationship as a fundamental creator of reality within organisations. Relationship is self-organising and complex and does not lend itself to scientific reasoning – hence its marginalisation.

Alan.

This highlights a reflection on how necessary it is for us to feel in control and how we will inhibit the language running through our heads to maintain that feeling.
From: Mark WILLIAMS  
Sent: Friday, 16 December 2005 16:57  
To: Mark WILLIAMS; Athol Barrett; Peter Taylor; Byrne, Alan; Ed La Vertu;  
Subject: Doctoral colloquium thanks  

Ed, Eddie, Athol, Alan, and Peter  

What a wonderful colloquium and related communication to finish the year with! Thanks all for your generous, caring, and creatively scholarly support.  

ECU is closed next Thursday. We will begin meeting again in the new year from Thursday 5th to Thurs 26th January and then a few weeks break till we begin again in late February.  

We will be meeting in my office for first semester. After that I may be taking up academic work in Shanghai or maybe Hong Kong (or maybe, who knows, Curtin, Notre Dame, or UWA - but Perth is a small fish bowl!).  

Negotiations were OK but my adjunct title was not accepted due to abuse of such things in the past and new measures to curtail this practice due to ECU becoming a teaching university it seems. The redundancy package is very generous.  

Thanks in good measure to our colloquium, I am accepting and will soon begin to thrive in the challenge of constructing new ways to move forward.  

How about this poem?  

Within the forthcoming of Being  
Contented love of my Life-World  
Comes within the expression of my body  
as I give and receive within Language  
Happiness and celebrations over Christmas and New Year, Mark  

A bolt from the blue. Mark had taken redundancy and I now had to deal with the unknown. For those of you who plan to undertake a PhD or are already in the throes of doing one, you will realise how important a sympathetic, knowledgeable, well connected supervisor is. To have found such a person, and then to have them removed prior to the finish is to say the least, disruptive.
From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Monday, 19 December 2005 08:14  
To: 'Mark WILLIAMS'  
Subject: RE: Doctoral colloquium thanks  
Attachments: Doctoral colloquium thanks

Hi Mark,
What does this mean for your role as a supervisor?
Alan.

From: Mark WILLIAMS  
Sent: Monday, 19 December 2005 09:20  
To: Byrne, Alan  
Subject: RE: Doctoral colloquium thanks

I'll still be your principal supervisor till completion of your doctorate.

Regards, Mark

From: Byrne, Alan  
Sent: Monday, 19 December 2005 09:41  
To: 'Mark WILLIAMS'  
Subject: RE: Doctoral colloquium thanks  
Attachments: RE: Doctoral colloquium thanks

That's good news, because nobody else at ECU would be competent enough in the areas we are examining.

Regards,
Alan.

From: Mark WILLIAMS  
Sent: Monday, 19 December 2005 12:03  
To: Mark WILLIAMS; Athol Barrett; Peter Taylor; Byrne, Alan ; Ed La Vertu; Sek188; ferguslaw  
Subject: RE: Doctoral colloquium thanks

Colleagues

I will be continuing to be principal supervisor for all of you who are my current PhD and DBA candidates til you complete their doctorates - Alan, Athol, Ed, and Fergus. I will use my present Churchlands office for 2006.

I am pleased with the negotiations with ECU regarding conditions and payout for my voluntary redundancy. The result gives me a strong platform for constructing a new employment future.
I am already involved in interesting possibilities for employment in 2006 on top of my session lecturing and research higher degree supervision. I may be somewhat involved in overseas operations but I will be based in Perth.

I trust that we will all find ways to experience contentment, joy, and happiness over Christmas and the New Year

Ciao, Mark

Seemingly a good note to end the year on.

From: Mark WILLIAMS
Sent: Tuesday, 20 December 2005 13:50
To: Byrne, Alan
Subject: RE: URGENT:

Attachments: Last draft EMANCIPATING A PROFESSIONAL.doc

Alan

Your points:

1. Finishing the email chapter allowing for any additional emails to come, and gathering written permission: - If need arises think creatively.

2. Finish the work on what attracted you to the initial philosophers - Rorty, Bakhtin, etc: - Perhaps these authors share a common language pattern which reveals certain common tendencies.

3. Finish off the literature review on power (Foucault's early stuff, not late!): - I agree, Foucault became increasingly overly graphic in his portrayal. Perhaps his work of art turned into a sadomasochistic nightmare.

4. Put in original diagram dealing with the knowledge continuum from postmodern through to post-modern: - Good

5. Write the chapter on "How an organisation could be a better place": - Good

6. Write chapter revolving around vignettes bringing out informing stories, narratives, or descriptions of how my experiences have shaped what I am writing about: I hope that you use lyric poetry here in addition to other pivotal points in the thesis. I am interested in the master-slave dialectic in some of the vignettes

7. Update diagram for dialogical continuum: In stating that role-playing may be language in the way that is unethical and the notion of "using ethical unethically - to get your own way, or to justify a decision". Is it buying into mongrelism? Better to think about their interaction and how they could interact with people in a different way.
8. The chapter of the vignettes and "What an organisation could be" are mine, what I have come to think, and I am not going to try to triangulate it, or refer to others, or justify it. The body of the thesis will allow the latter chapter to make sense.

Note that language responds to possibilities (the forthcoming of being) by some of us being more in the centre of that language pattern. It is naive to suggest we can change others, we can merely prick a pattern of language to allow other patterns of language to emerge. Maybe if you prick in the right place they will start leaking.

Regards, Mark

*My last meeting with Mark for the year, and we set out the plan for completion of my PhD.*
Hi Mark,

Final e-mail for 2005. I have been pondering on what exactly management is all about. Hierarchies, CEO’s, CFO’s, Directors, Managers, Supervisors, Departments etc.

I now view this language game (It) as being merely a control mechanism – a way of controlling our interactions, our cooperative relationships. It provides a context for how we interact with each other. Do I think this interaction is constraining on our conversations? – you bet I do. Such language is a power play, it allows us to ignominiously succumb to our roles amongst a gathering of people whose identity is aligned to a third party description of who they are.

This legitimises the slave/master relationship. The categories into which we place ourselves and others are blindly accepted and remain unquestioned.

We have to find another way of describing our interactions together which does not presuppose a character type or assumed behaviours.

So for example if you are the supervisor and I am the student – how does this description control our interactions? - in our case not much because we don’t accept such categorisations.

I also want to restate again that the focus of this study is relationship. I am not suggesting that scientific management does not have its place. Personally I don’t want to go across a bridge which has not been constructed to the highest technical standards. The context is important. I am describing relationship between people as being very important. All else merely facilitates that interaction. It is through co-operative interaction that our world/ our reality is shaped, is created. How we feel about the world is dependent on our social interaction.

Wishing you and your family a peaceful Christmas and hoping good things happen for you in the New Year.

Alan.

This is a precursor to my turn to ideologies and the ubiquitous conventionality.
Happy New Year Alan.

I have scanned your email chapter. You have recorded a remarkable journey of scholarship that has all the hallmarks of good research.

Your new thoughts add more power and weight that is none-the-less carried lightly and nimbly. Your insights ring true to your rich descriptions of your lived experience. If you have my doctoral thesis you could look to my conversation regarding defence of my research goodness - in the second and third chapters from memory.

I particularly am interested in what you were saying in our last conversation regarding that your journey has reached a destination from which you can finish this doctoral stage of your research and concentrate on writing up your thesis to present. I would like to see you submit your thesis this year. Any new evolutions of your ideas could be added as "new insights", included in the text, as your write.

All is well for me and family and friends. I am having a settling down holiday. I am doing a lot of artwork and the expression of my body, my language (including thoughts, dreams, visualisations), is increasingly veering towards my paintings.

I opened my email today, partially accidentally (I am scanning the internet for Australian iconographic images), and scanning through decided to answer your email only. I have decided to return to the office on Thursday 5th and then to begin my year's academic labours - hope to see you in the arvo. I am resolutely committed to seeing you, Fergus, and Athol through to your doctoral awards.

I think the flow of language is that, in our colloquium, I will increasingly present my research as a professional action research account of me as an artist-painter. I intend to publish this account as a popular autobiographical book entitled something like "Portrait of an Australian Underground Artist". I will present my last fourteen years of Un-bound labours as as chapter with a title such as "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog in Academia". My eight years teaching in Secondary Schools might be "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog in Secondary Schools". etc etc

Regards, Mark
Thank you for your chapter on the collation of the emails. It is compelling reading as an account of your emergence.

Do you think you can add in more of the inserted comments. They really do add so much value. In fact, as good as the emails read, your comments are the true diamonds in the chapter.

Regards, Mark

From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Monday, 9 January 2006 12:27
To: 'm.williams'
Subject: Update

Hi Mark,

I have just finished two weeks leave – took a complete break from work and study. Now ready to get back into the study. Thanks for your feedback.

I did have some thoughts over the period on role play. As you are aware in my initial models I took the stand that we need to improve our dialogue with each other to dilute the master/slave relationship and gain and grant more freedom in our relationships. In order to do this I proposed that we fill particular roles – to move along the dialogical continuum from magistral to democratic.

I now assert that roles contribute to the master/slave relationship. They enable us to categorise/ to be categorised. Roles fulfil the human need for certainty – we know how people will be according to the roles they fill. Roles therefore inhibit freedom in relationships. They are a constraint. Why should we ‘fill’ a role and why should we be judged according to the role we fill? What happens if we don’t play the role we fill – do we become marginalised?

So if we choose not to play a role – are we playing the role of someone who does not play a role? Is there a person separate from the roles we play? If so that is where the freedom lies – in being the human being you are, not the one you are expected to be. So within an organisation there must exist greater acceptance of people as human beings, not as role players. If we categorise people into roles we contribute to constraining their potential, our own potential and our interactions.

Regards,

Alan.

Clarifying my earlier thoughts on roles and role playing and its effect on us as human beings.
Hi Alan

Good to hear you are back in action.

Acting our roles I think is inevitable - even the role of not acting out a role. Cupitt, in "The long legged fly" draws a distinction between the "philosophers of desire" (for human freedom) - Rousseau, Nietzsche - and the "Philosophers of culture" (we are all inevitably controlled) - Freud, Lacan, Foucault. I think there is a difference between playing a role to be accepted into the master/slave language and playing a role as a Nietzsche "superman" who is neither master nor slave because he does not need a slave thus not needing to be a master.

I will write more later - now I am teaching summer school! See you face-to-face on Thursday arvo?

Ciao, Mark

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From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Tue 17/01/2006 12:05 PM
To: 'm.williams'
Subject: Update

Another poem Mark – who else would understand it?

Freedom sought through redescription
Slaves described remain
Language creates realities
Vocabulary unveils
Interaction as ethical relationship
Maximal freedom of being privileged

Regards,

Alan.

My final poem based on the creation of reality through language.
From: Mark WILLIAMS
Sent: Wed 18/01/2006 10:38 AM
To: Byrne, Alan
Subject: RE: Update

I understand on some levels ... as with all poetry there are many.

The line "Slaves described remain" ... on one level do you mean that if we or others describe themselves as slaves then we or they remain as slave?

I am presently describing my reality as I go through the administrative arrangements for my freeing myself from my prior enslavement. I am finding it a challenging, yet liberating experience. What a great life, what brightness, the forthcoming of being enables us to construct here in Perth!

Regards, Mark

From: Byrne, Alan
Sent: Wed 18/01/2006 2:10 PM
To: 'Mark WILLIAMS'
Subject: RE: Update

Freedom sought through redescription
Slaves described remain
Language creates realities
Vocabulary unveils
Interaction as ethical relationship
Maximal freedom of being privileged

The answer: It is through re-description, occasioned by an increased vocabulary (how else can you re-describe) that we can create new relationship realities. Of course re-description is merely new or different language and leads us to think differently. If we describe ourselves as slaves, we will think of ourselves as slaves and remain as such. If we re-describe our relationships we have the potential to gain some form of freedom, but it must be in the context of giving and receiving maximal freedom – an ethical relationship. Just because we re-describe our relationship does not mean that the other parties will similarly experience a new reality, but it may be a start. Greater freedom may emerge, but it must have a beginning. The freedom is freedom from being either slave or master – you play neither role, you are what you are as appropriate to the living present, granting and receiving maximal happiness and freedom in your human interactions.

Regards,

Alan.
What I would now like to do prior to proceeding to the End, is add to the literature reviews in the area of evolution, and power and ideology in our interactions. I did not include these in the original proposals, as to do so would have muddied the waters of my voyage of discovery.

2.12 FURTHER LITERATURE REVIEW – EVOLUTION:

My original interest in evolution has not waned despite the new discoveries that have presented themselves on my voyage of discovery. I have moved from an individualist perspective to privileging the social. Without relationship we would be nothing but chemicals floating in the primordial soup of life, I believe my earlier review of evolution illuminated this point. You may not agree with the theory of evolution and I respect that as your right. Nor am I suggesting that evolutionists are correct, they may or may not be. But in gaining an understanding of this study it is crucial that you gain insight into how I have developed my own views on organisations and the importance of human co-operative interaction through language.

2.12.1 NORBERT ELIAS AND GEORGE MEAD ON INSTINCT AND SOCIAL INTERACTION

Mennell (1992) describes the work of Norbert Elias, a German sociologist. Elias commented on the human capacity for learning:

“…the capacities for learning all the human skills and modes of behaviour, thinking and feeling – from walking, sitting, talking and cooking, to the vast array of customs, manners and beliefs peculiar to particular human groups – are laid down in the biological and genetic structures of the human organism, which are the same in every society” (Mennell, 1992 p. 200).

Elias also stated that biologically humans are one single species. The continued existence of other species resulted in biological differentiation or speciation, so that plants, insects, fishes, birds and mammals divided into a great number of species. They were unable to interbreed and exploited their own particular part of the globe to whose environment they were best adapted. The single human species however adapted to vastly different conditions on earth not by biological differentiation, but by cultural differentiation.

Elias contends (Mennell, 1992) that there has been insufficient attention to those distinct biological characteristics that enable humans to learn from experience and to transmit knowledge from one generation to the next. Elias refers to the human capacity for making tools. This cannot have been the outcome of a biological process alone. He believes it emerged through the intertwining of a biological and a social process. The ability to use tools was not a punctuated point in evolutionary time. It took place over a long time period, Elias believes due to in part the biological limitations on learning capacity. However that capacity grew, probably contributed in part to the pressure of social processes and went on increasing way beyond the learning capacity of other species.
“Ultimately, the human biological capacity for learning became so great that it could accommodate the growing – and ever more quickly growing – social fund of knowledge without further biological changes” (Mennell, 1992 p. 203).

This could be viewed as an evolutionary breakthrough. In some agreement with evolutionary psychologists such as Nicholsen (2000), Elias believed that there was an unlearned, genetically transmitted repertoire of reactions or instincts dominant in steering the behaviour of each species. However the scope of learning capacity increased gradually in the course of evolution. So with Apes the balance between unlearned and learned behaviour is weighted heavily towards the former. With the early tool making humans the balance tilted in favour of learning. This gave humans a huge advantage of other species. Genetically programmed behaviour, dominant in other species, can only change over a long period of time. However

“It is human beings’ biological equipment for learning that has emancipated them from dependence on further biological change” (Mennell, 1992 p. 204).

Human beings have an exceptional capacity for learning and according to Elias a unique capacity for synthesis, making connections through the use of symbols and transmitting knowledge in the form of symbols from one generation to the next, making possible rapid social differentiation and adaptation to new circumstances independently of biological change. So for Elias the human being is not a tabula rasa. Instincts are passed on genetically as with other animals. However humans have, through symbolic interactions the capacity to learn.

The key to this learning is relationships with other people. Learning is a two way process. Take for example the vocal apparatus, where processes of biological maturation and of social learning have to intertwine with each other to produce linguistic sounds. It also enables learning to understand the other person’s use of language. According to Mennell (1992) Elias liked to use the example of the human face and its place in communication between humans. The face is extremely complex capable of showing many types of emotion and also is capable of being shaped by experience. Elias speculates that facial signals emerged as a means of communication before people had any meaningful language. Facial expressions had an advantage in group life. They helped to probe each other’s intention as to what one was about to do allowing for appropriate responses. This was a form of civilizing, allowing people to be together. Elias believes that all humans have to learn to control their emotions and their instincts. According to Elias, people are not by nature civilized but they are by nature civilizable. The controls are acquired through social learning, and the biological disposition to acquire the controls by social learning is built into the human constitution.

So Elias points to the essential role of relationship in the evolution of human beings and intertwines this with the human biological disposition towards social learning.

Whereas Elias refers to the unlearned (genetic) and learned (social) behaviour of humans Mead (1972) examines the biologic and the socially self-conscious individual. The distinction between the two for Mead is between our biologic inheritance from lower life and the control humans’ exercise over themselves and the environment. It is the difference between instinct (genetic) and reason (social). As with Elias, the two are not separated as rational conduct (behaviour) evolves from impulsive conduct. Mead believes that it is in the social behaviour of people that this evolution takes place.
In the introduction, Morris writes that Mead “…has shown that mind and the self are, without remainder, generated in a social process” (Mead, 1972 p. xv). For Mead mind and self arise through the significant symbol of language and it is through language that the rational human arises. The biologic individual in communication responded to signs, it was unconscious communication. However through what Mead terms significant symbols such as vocal gestures the person uses the symbol and does not merely respond to signs (as the lower animals do); mind has been acquired, and it is acquired in a social process. The mind is social.

“The significant gesture, itself a part of the social process, internalizes and makes available to the component biologic individuals the meanings which have themselves emerged in the earlier, non significant, stages of gestural communication. Instead of beginning with individual minds and working out to society, Mead starts with an objective social process of communication into the individual by the medium of the vocal gesture” (Mead, 1972 p. xxii).

Not all animals communicating at the level of the conversation of gestures pass to the level of the significant symbol; the transformation from impulse to rationality. Mead believes that only humans have the neurological capacity required for significant symbols/language. It is the human cortex and the human nervous system which permits the evolution from instinct to rationality

“It is only in a social process that selves, as distinct from biological organisms can arise – selves as beings that have become conscious of themselves” (Mead, 1972 p. xxiv). Summing up Morris recounts:

“Through a social process, then, the biologic individual of proper organic stuff gets a mind and a self. Through society the impulsive animal becomes a rational animal, a man. In virtue of the internalization or importation of the social process of communication, the individual gains the mechanisms of reflective thought (the ability to direct his action in terms of the foreseen consequences of alternatives course of action); acquires the ability to make himself an object to himself and to live in a common moral and scientific world; becomes a moral individual with impulsive ends transformed into the conscious pursuit of ends-in-view. Because of the emergence of such an individual, society is in turn transformed” (Mead, 1972 pp. xxv - xxvi).

Mead believes that “We are what we are through our relationship with others” (Mead, 1972 p. 375). Mead views social interaction as fundamental to human evolution:

“The behaviour of all living organisms has a basically social aspect: the fundamental biological or physiological impulses and needs which lie at the basis of all such behaviour – especially those of hunger and sex, those connected with nutrition and reproduction – are impulses and needs which, in the broadest sense, are social in character or have social implications, since they involve or require social situations and relations for their satisfaction by any given individual organism; and they thus constitute the foundation of all types or forms of social behaviour, however simple or complex, crude or highly organized, rudimentary or well organized” (Mead, 1972 p. 228).

Mead goes on to say that:

“There is no living organism of any kind whose nature or constitution is such that it could exist or maintain itself in complete isolation from all other living organisms, or such that certain relations to other living organisms (whether of its own or of other species) – relations which in the strict sense are social – do not play a necessary and indispensable part of its life. All living organisms are
bound up in a general social environment or situation, in a complex of social interrelations and interactions upon which their continued existence depends” (Mead, 1972 p. 228).

2.12.2 PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECT OF SOCIAL INTERACTION

That social interaction is important to human health is outlined in research by Heaphy and Dutton (2005). Through research they demonstrate that the quality of interpersonal relationships effects human health. They looked at the cardiovascular, immune and neuroendocrine systems. Their research showed how we are connected to others in vital ways. Not only do we need to interact socially to evolve, we need good quality social interactions for our physiological well-being.

2.12.3 SUMMARY

If we accept the importance of relationship in the evolution of human beings, and indeed the necessity of social interaction to that evolution, what questions does that raise about much of today’s thinking about ‘the organisation’ where the individual reigns supreme and is the creator of knowledge and the reality each of us experience. My wish is to bring to bright consciousness the underlying presuppositions of much of management thinking. It is not all about the individual or competition. There is space for reflecting on cooperative interaction; relationship. This humaneness has somehow been waylaid in the pursuit of self-gratification and power through the artificiality of the capitalist ideology, to which we must all bow and be measured against. It is only by becoming conscious of these ideologies that we can escape the biologic/unlearned person and evolve towards the socially self conscious / learned person. We must take our language seriously and become more aware of our human interactions and how they shape the world we live in.

2.13 FURTHER LITERATURE REVIEW – POWER AND IDEOLOGIES

A quote I quite like from Franz Boas, a German born American anthropologist: “How do we recognize the shackles that tradition has placed upon us? For if we recognize them, we are also able to break them”.

I came across this quote whilst reading Norman Fairclough’s book Language and power (Fairclough, 1989). It resonates with me because it represents what this study is about. Only if you become aware of what makes organisations what they are can you discover what they could be.

Fairclough wants to “…help increase consciousness of how language contributes to the domination of some people by others, because consciousness is the first step towards emancipation” (Fairclough, 1989 p. 1).

This is music to my ears. All I can hope for with this study is to raise questions and offer opinions. My wish is that you will be enabled to think about organisations differently and to openly question many of the presuppositions of management theory, perhaps becoming a catalyst for language change yourself.
Fairclough examines the common sense assumptions under which people’s interactions take place. Many are unaware of these assumptions, which are embedded in the everyday language we use. Such assumptions lead to conventions or ideologies. So for example the interaction between a doctor and patient embodies a common-sense assumption that treats authority and hierarchy as natural and unquestioned. Fairclough wants to

“...help people to see the extent to which their language does rest upon common-sense assumptions, and the ways in which these common-sense assumptions can be ideologically shaped by relations of power” (Fairclough, 1989 p. 4).

As my focus is primarily the business world, I am particularly taken with Fairclough’s idea of ideological power, “The power to project one’s practices as universal and ‘common sense’” (Fairclough, 1989 p.33). This is where those in power can gain others consent or acquiescence in both their possession and exercise of power. “Ideology is the key mechanism of rule by consent” and discourse “…is the favoured vehicle of ideology” (Fairclough, 1989 p. 34).

With face-to-face discourse, or human interaction through language, the power in discourse is where the more powerful participants constrain the contributions from less powerful participants. According to Fairclough it is the prerogative of the powerful participant (in my experience the most powerful are those at the upper levels of the hierarchy, power is positional) to determine which language type will be used. Together with their positional power, the ability to constrain the less powerful is expanded. It is the more powerful who legitimize the type of language used. Once chosen the conventions or common-sense assumptions apply, but may be treated by the more powerful in cavalier way. So the most powerful in the hierarchy set the official ideologies through the language they use. The less powerful are constrained by the conventions associated with these ideologies, but usually through consent. The more powerful can use/not use the conventions as they see fit, offering some latitude to the less powerful as they feel appropriate.

Interestingly Fairclough talks about a standard national language in the United Kingdom. Standard English developed at the expense of Latin and French and other non-standard social dialects such as Welsh and Gaelic. According to Fairclough:

“The establishment of the dominance of standard English and the subordination of other social dialects was part and parcel of the establishment of the dominance of the capitalist class and the subordination of the working class” (Fairclough, 1989 p. 57).

The dominance of the capitalist class was reflected in the language, and I believe continues to be reflected in the organisations of today, establishing a power differential between management and non-management.

There are conventions associated with discourse type which gives rights to the most powerful party. These rights give power to the power holders who use sanctions and affirmations to enforce the associated conventions. The conventions embody the dominant ideologies of those in power. Fairclough states:

“Conventions routinely drawn upon in discourse embody ideological assumptions which come to be taken as mere common sense and which contributes to sustaining existing power relations” (Fairclough, 1989 p. 76).

The power lies with those who can legitimize ideologies.
“Having the power to determine things like which word meanings or which linguistic and communicative norms are legitimate or ‘correct’ or ‘appropriate’ is an important aspect of social and ideological power” (Fairclough, 1989 p. 88-89).

In my experience it is the senior management who legitimize the way of taking about things and who determine appropriate discourses, thereby vesting within themselves ideological power. Theirs is the dominant discourse in a gathering of people and is accompanied by the establishment of certain ideological assumptions as commonsensical. If the organisation becomes dominated by this discourse to the point where other discourse types are either entirely suppressed or constrained, it will be seen as natural and legitimate.

“A dominant discourse is subject to a process of naturalization in which it appears to lose its connection with particular ideologies and interests and become the common-sense practice of the institution. Thus when ideology becomes common sense, it apparently ceases to be an ideology; this is itself and ideological effect, for ideology is truly effective only when it is disguised.” (Fairclough, 1989 p. 107).

Fairclough explores how one might assist in expanding consciousness of how language contributes to the domination of some people by others; the raising of consciousness being the first step towards emancipation. He believes that “struggle opens people to the raising of consciousness, which empowers them to engage in the struggle” (Fairclough, 1989 p. 234).

So marginalized staff might seek to understand their marginalization thereby raising the consciousness of what has caused the marginalization. People involved in the struggle can act as catalysts, much as I am trying to do in this study by raising consciousness of the presuppositions of management theory. Fairclough states that to enable such consciousness in others, the people doing so must have the theoretical background as well as sharing the experience of the oppressed, sufficiently to be accepted as catalysts. Emancipatory discourse is a term used by Fairclough. It is a “discourse which goes outside currently dominant conventions in some way” (Fairclough, 1989 p. 243). This reminds me of Rorty’s (1989) re-description where new realities can be created due to changes in your language.

I view the whole hierarchical structure and much management theory as supporting an ideology which privileges owners as the most powerful. The conventions are many, such as the assumed power of people who are higher up in the hierarchy and their privilege in deciding upon what others need to do to achieve their objectives. There are role conventions, meeting conventions etc; reinforced by the dominant discourse of management and management textbooks and management education. That this has become naturalized and commonsensical is obvious to anybody who tries to question it, or provide an alternative. Such people can become marginalized and will struggle against the dominant discourse, which will largely remain disguised behind touchy feely tree hugging sentiments espoused by the most powerful. All you can do, as the less powerful is to engage in an emancipatory discourse which seeks to bring to consciousness (a change in language) what is actually taking place.

I believe that the dominant discourse is strengthened by the design of the workplace. Recently I moved out of my office and into an open-plan environment. It was an enforced move, and I left behind the sanctuary of my own office for the first time in
over twenty years. Suddenly my comings and goings, my conversations, everything about me became known to those working within listening and watching proximity to my workplace. I had surrendered privacy and some freedom; something others in a less privileged and less powerful position than I had sacrificed many years previously. Coupled with this the open-plan areas are extremely well lit, computer screens are clearly visible to any body in the area, partitions are only half height and any phone conversation is easily listened to. I had not considered the implication of such workplace design until reading some of the work of Michael Foucault (1980).

Having read an interview given by Michael Foucault (1980), I now come to describe open-plan as yet another form of control by the most powerful, enforcing the role of the master. You are exposed to ongoing surveillance (all our internet access, for example, is monitored, albeit with our consent. If you don’t consent, you don’t use it) both from the most and least powerful. Meanwhile the most powerful retain their offices which are positioned in close proximity to the staff working under (or should that be beneath?) them.

Michael Foucault commented on the approach idealized in the Panopticon, originated by Jeremy Bentham. Foucault came across this work whilst studying the problems of the penal system in his work ‘Discipline and Punish: The birth of the Prison’. The Panopticon is described by Foucault as follows:

“A perimeter building in the form of a ring. At the centre of this, a tower, pierced by large windows opening on to the inner face of the ring. The outer building is divided into cells each of which traverses the whole thickness of the building. These cells have two windows, one opening on to the inside, facing the windows of the central tower, the other, outer one allowing daylight to pass through the whole cell. All that is needed is to put an overseer in the tower and place in each of the cells a lunatic, a patient, a convict, a worker or a schoolboy. The back lighting enables one to pick out from the central tower the little captive silhouettes in the ring of cells. In short the principle of the dungeon is reversed; daylight and the overseers gaze capture the inmate more effectively than darkness, which afforded after all a sort of protection” (Foucault, 1980 p. 147)

Compare this to the well lit cubicles I share with my fellow workers, where I am totally exposed to any passing person and more immediately to those around me. I have had occasion in the past to re-locate a work colleague due to intermittent surveillance by a more powerful staff member who covertly took note of the less powerful staff members computer screens and decided they were not being productive.

There is an alternative view of the Panopticon. According to Foucault, Jean Jacques Rousseau had a dream:

“...of a transparent society, visible and legible in each of its parts, the dream of there no longer existing any zones of darkness, zones established by the privileges of royal power or the prerogatives of some corporation, zones of disorder. It was the dream that each individual, whatever position he occupied, might be able to see the whole of society, that men’s hearts should communicate, their vision be unrestricted by obstacles, and the opinion of all reign over each” (Foucault, 1980 p. 152)
What Bentham had in mind was visibility organized entirely around a dominating, overseeing gaze. The visibility serves a power. However the French revolution found a humanitarian intention in the Bentham project. Foucault describes it as follows:

“The new aspect of the problem of justice, for the revolution, was not so much to punish wrongdoers as to prevent even the possibility of wrong-doing, by immersing people in a field of total visibility where the opinion, observation and discourse of others would restrain them from harmful acts” (Foucault, 1980 p. 153)

Bentham’s project aroused interest because

“…it provided a formula applicable to many domains, for formula of ‘power through transparency’, subjection by ‘illumination’” (Foucault, 1980 p. 154).

Foucault refers to the power of a persons gaze “An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorizing to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself” (Foucault, 1980 p. 155)

It is my experience with open-plan that places of darkness are removed and the overseen become the overseer negating much of the need for the dominant overseer. Thus this becomes a very economic form of surveillance. The enslaved monitor the enslaved, reducing the cost to the master. But is this observation merely an illusion of power?

The people that work together do not merely present a tabula rasa, there can be and is in my experience resistance. Staff learn who to trust and not, regarding their words and actions accordingly. Such efforts take from themselves and others much of their potential to contribute to an enjoyable business world. They cannot grant freedom to others, if not to themselves first.

How you describe open-plan in your workplace is how you experience it. Your description will create the reality you share in interaction with others. For myself, I can see that open planning can be a leveller, a democratic symbol that can contribute towards the emancipation of slave and master. However where differences in physical work conditions persist, the democracy so described, is diminished. In my experience all but the senior management were subject to open-plan work areas. Therefore divisions persisted and the dominant maintained their rule and surveillance. The greater the consideration I apply to open-plan offices, the more I become convinced they are about control of the less powerful, ensuring compliance with determined observable behaviours. Open-planning has become a convention, unquestioned in application, part of an embedded ideology that privileges the most powerful.

Rousseau said

“Since no man has a natural authority over his fellow, and force creates no right, we must conclude that conventions form the basis of all legitimate authority among men” (Rousseau, 1966 p. 7). This thought makes sense of Rousseau’s statement that “Man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains” (Rousseau, 1966 p. 3).

Griffin talks of ideology as being an oppressor of certain truths. I can relate this to convention, the unquestioning of the presuppositions that guide much of the ideology embedded in management practice. Griffin relates:

“And now I begin to suspect that all ideology must share a hidden tendency. For beyond a just description of the truth, an ideology holds the promise that one
may control reality with the mind, assert the ideal as more real than reality” (S. Griffin, 1982 p. 646)

Instead of controlling reality with the mind, I would propose that we create reality with our language and therefore ideology can be embedded in the language we use. Where that language is representative of an ideology and becomes convention, it can impose upon us a reality that oppresses. Griffin, I believe in agreement with Rousseau’s statement that we are everywhere in chains, states that even theories of liberation become ideologies which can oppress and resist other theories of liberation:

“But when a theory is transformed into an ideology, it begins to destroy the self and self-knowledge. Originally born of feeling, it pretends to float above and around feeling. Above sensation. It organizes experience according to itself, without touching experience. By virtue of being itself, it is supposed to know. To invoke the name of this ideology is to confer truthfulness. No one can tell it anything new. Experience ceases to surprise it, inform it, transform it. It is annoyed by any detail which does not fit into its world view. Begun as a cry against the denial of truth, now it denies any truth which does not fit into its scheme. Begun as a way to restore one’s sense of reality, now it attempts to discipline real people, to remake natural beings after its own image. All that it fails to explain it records as dangerous. All that makes it question, it regards as its enemy. Begun as a theory of liberation, it is threatened by new theories of liberation; slowly it builds a prison for the mind” (S. Griffin, 1982 p. 648).

Griffin it appears to me, believes there is a ‘truth’ an objective reality. It makes more sense to me that we create our realities in our cooperative interactions, but I would not discount there being an objective reality. What I do concur with is that ideologies are ubiquitous. To cope with them we must bring them to consciousness in the language we use. It is through our language in co-operative interaction with others that liberation, freedom and emancipation can take form. Perhaps there is no escape from ideologies, but by uncovering the conventions that guide us daily and discussing them, we may at least be freed from the tyranny of disguised oppression that makes such conventions beyond discussion. Only in such conversations at a local level, can we hope that new realities will emerge that will provide for a better way of being. That this will be an ongoing process is without question as we would need to continually fight for our language to evolve beyond oppressive ideologies.
3 THE END

What follows is a conversation between you and me. As this is a conversation, I have included no referencing. I have no desire to quote anybody, to justify my thinking, to validate it; to add scientific rigor to my writing. Quite frankly I’m sick of it; it being this academic fallacy of having to verify, validate everything you write. If such an approach is a panacea of academic excellence and academic excellence is a precursor for a better society, then why is the world in such a mess, such a state of chaos and general meaningless? Could it simply be that we are missing the point? Following the wrong path? Privileging the scientific method as ‘the true’ method with even qualitative methods having to satisfy scientific validities. This chapter represents my experience, my thinking and I will generalize, give opinions and make statements as I feel them. This will enable the flow of the language running through my head and onto the paper. Certainly I may use others expressions and ideas, as I would if I was sitting across the table from you. What I would not do is have a reference book by my side. In the everyday language we use, how much of it is original? How many original concepts are there, concepts that have never been discussed before, by anybody? Language is ours. Vocabulary does not belong to anyone.

There is a great feeling of freedom in self-expression. Besides in other parts of this thesis I have included copious references and taken no credit for what are other people’s ideas. The language used below is my construction from my vocabulary. That this vocabulary has been enhanced by my readings and studies is unquestioned and I thank the authors. The originality is that it is me that is saying it; it is my language. Don’t mistake this approach for arrogance, quite the opposite. I believe we should privilege the ordinariness of what people have to say about their lives and the lessons they have learnt. Only by doing so will we appreciate ‘how things really are’. This is my work of art.

Before continuing I need to discuss what art means to me. I am not yet able to draw, play musical instruments or dance. I can sing a bit, which brings me great enjoyment. Lately I have found similar enjoyment in writing, like I am right now. Art to me means expression of emotion. When I write how I feel about organisations and society’s tendency to reify them allowing the people who take the action to remain anonymous, I can feel the anger being expressed in my words. Following the expression of that anger in words, it dissipated. It was released in the writing. Similarly when I talk of my favourite philosophers there is joy experienced in the writing. My hope is that this expression of my emotion through writing will touch you on a very human level. This for me is the difference between art and the skilled regurgitation of learned technique. If you listen to a musical artist I believe you will be touched at a human level you will not be by listening to a skilled musician who can follow the notes on a page. The artist expresses their emotion through their language, be that the language of music, of dance, of writing or whatever. If we have no artistic outlet for our emotions then where do they go? How do they find expression?
3.1 THESIS TITLES HISTORY

To summarise my voyage I would now like to lay before you a history of thesis title changes that have happened as I benefited from my interactions with others.

This chapter shows just how many times your focus changes when undertaking a PhD. It took me over a year of reading to come up with the first title and I had no intention of ever changing it. But change it I did as my language through interaction with others developed. The result is a map of my progress. I provide a brief explanation behind each change. None of the changes were made without significant thought and discussion with others before hand, particularly later on with my colleagues at our weekly doctoral colloquium.

a) Co-operation amongst people in organisations: An evolutionary perspective

What sparked my initial interest was an anti-competitive stance fuelled by a lack of co-operation amongst people in the business world. I wanted to find out if there was a better way and looked to the distant past for the answers. What I discovered was that the evolution of life was punctuated with cooperation; without it we would not be here today. I therefore sought to extrapolate the cooperation I found in life to the business world, to see if there was a better way for us to be, rather than the individual ultra-competitive go-getter much valued in society who does not care who they step on to get where they want to. I found an industrial park in Denmark, Kalundborg, where there was a symbiotic relationship between the organisations (I use the term organisation as symbolic for ease of understanding, I attribute no life to an organisation nor do I view it as being a person). Cooperation was a pre-requisite for survival and worked. I wanted to explore the nature of co-operative behaviour.

The main topic of conversation with my supervisor was research methodology and ethics clearance with a definite leaning towards conventional research. For that reason I had introduced research methods such as questionnaires and interviews to explore why cooperation evolves in organisations and how such co-operation could be actively promoted leading to the emergence of positive, stakeholder oriented organisational change. I was going to examine cooperation amongst organisations in the same field as my current employer and also between different industries in an industrial network in Kalundborg, located in Denmark.

b) Postmodernist Knowledge Creation: An ethical perspective

I had originally planned to examine the importance of co-operation amongst people. My readings, particularly of Stacey, drew me to the interaction of people through conversation, which required co-operation. From such co-operative interaction knowledge was created. That this process was self-organising appealed to the anti-managerialist in me. It also seemed more ethical as it was within the capacity and capability of everyone and under the control of no one.

This represented a fundamental shift from where I had begun and took considerable time and thought to conceptualise. Now I was focused on knowledge creation within an organisation. But how could it be researched? I was plagued by doubt over how I was
going to show how knowledge was created in our conversations. I concentrated on conversation analysis as a likely methodology, and focused on formal and informal conversation in the workplace. There was a nagging doubt if I actually wanted to learn and engage in conversation analysis, and even then would it point to knowledge creation? Kalundborg was too difficult to proceed with, and I dropped it from the research proposal.

c) Refocusing Management Attention on how things get done anyway: A Complex Responsive Process of Relating perspective on the creation of meaning in organisations

I obtained from Professor Stacey a chapter on research methodologies for his theory of complex responsive process of relating. I was smitten. After near panic of how I was going to proceed here at last was a way forward. Professor Stacey had his doctoral candidates meet and discuss their everyday work practices and then write about them with reference to his theories. Seemed plausible to me. The problem was that I in no way wanted to dilute the purity of Professor Stacey’s work and was enamoured with the ideal of his approach. This ideal meant that you had to allow for free conversation and not seek to encourage or observe it; you had to be part of it. It was a self-reflexive process. The focus was on how things get done anyway in organisations despite controls, policies and procedures. My thinking was to expose the formal (legitimate) side of the organisation, through examination of policy and other corporate documents and the formal language at meetings and to compare this to how things actually got done and the informal (illegitimate) conversations where I believed knowledge was actually created.

I was having problems conceptualising how I was ever going to demonstrate knowledge being created. For me it was a major stumbling block, but I hung on rigidly to the Stacey ideal. I had moved to examine the concept of making meaning. I must admit that for quite some time I struggled with the difference between creating knowledge and creating meaning, and in my earlier drafts I interchanged the words with ease. However I had come to view the difference as knowledge being epistemological and meaning being ontological. I was more drawn to the ontological perspective at this stage.

d) Understanding what causes an organisation to be what it is and to become what it will be: A Complex Responsive Process of Relating perspective

I became increasingly interested in Stacey’s teleological analysis of why organisations are what they are. Stacey’s framework in one of his main texts was one of examining corporate strategy and critiquing what actually makes the organisation what it is. Suddenly a more concrete path presented itself under which my thinking did not shift. If I examined corporate strategy and official documents I could present how senior management believe the organisation had become what it is and will be. I could then look at how things actually got done and present an alternative understanding along the lines of Stacey’s teleological analysis.

In one fell swoop I had eliminated the doubt over how I was going to demonstrate knowledge or meaning creation. Strategy was more tangible and easier to locate. I felt I would be able to show that it was the informal organisation that actually made the
organisation what it was, not the intended design of management. I remained within the mainstream by continuing to support a case study approach.

e) What causes an organisation to be what it is and to become what it will be? A postmodern anti-realist neo-pragmatic heuristic reflexive inquiry

My research proposal was still not completed, though I thought it was. My supervisor continued to question the focus and research that was going to be carried on within the organisation. To assist in my thinking I was introduced to a doctoral colloquium which met once a week. This was to be a pivotal moment in my progress. I was introduced to philosophy which opened up new spaces in my thinking. I began to understand at a deeper level, the presuppositions of management theory which Professor Stacey had exposed. I wanted to learn more and did. I read philosophers such as Socrates, Nietzsche, Bakhtin, Elias, Foucault, Vygotsky, Wittgenstein, Descartes and Rorty. For the first time I understood Professor Stacey as a management philosopher. I began to disagree with him on some issues, and began to identify those areas of philosophy that resonated with me, particularly the work of Richard Rorty.

In fact I made the linguistic turn. From conversation as the creator of knowledge/meaning, to conversation as the cause of organisational direction, to conversation as the creator of reality. This positioned me as an anti-realist and neo-pragmatist, titles I was pleased to include in the title and to be associated with. I felt free from the confines of what I now observed as Stacey’s idealism. As a neo-pragmatist I could take what I needed from his work and join it with something else. I also resolved the epistemological/ontological conundrum I had been facing earlier. If, as I believe, we are continually creating realities through our interactions through language you are unable to separate ontology and epistemology.

The research methodology had moved from that proposed by Stacey’s theory of complex responsive processes of relating to autoethnography, a self-reflexive research methodology existing at the boundaries of acceptable research methods. Its reliance on the self as the research object and subject had great appeal to me. I also discovered heuristic inquiry as a research method and its lack of recognizable structure and legitimation of eureka inspired insights made sense to me. I felt that I had arrived at a legitimate position, a position that legitimized my illegitimate research.

f) What causes an organisation to be what it is and to become what it will be? A postmodern pragmatic heuristic reflexive inquiry

I decided that with the word postmodern I no longer needed the word neo in neo-pragmatic. I felt it was redundant.
g) What causes an organisation to be what it is and to become what it will be?  
A postmodern pragmatic heuristic reflexive exploration

For some time I had wanted to explore my own capacity for lyrical writing. I had refrained due to the audience I traditionally wrote for, but decided with encouragement from my colleagues in the doctoral colloquium, that I would write as I felt. To this end I decided upon an overarching metaphor for my thesis. It would be an exploration, and I could use the imagery associated with exploration to enable my own lyrical writing style, in my own authorial voice.

h) What causes an organisation to be what it is and to become what it will be?  
A postmodern pragmatic heuristic reflexive expedition

Exploration seemed too mundane, tried and tested. Instead I changed the word to expedition which had more of the untried, untested and unknown feel about it. I also decided that this would be my voyage of discovery. I was to be the vessel setting sail on seas of thought with winds of understanding; it was to be an uncharted expedition. The imagery was stronger than exploration and allowed greater licence to play. I also associate the sea with freedom, that being a lack of structure and control. My proposal was ready.

I presented to a group and got feedback from two reviewers. They felt the title was not focused enough and that I had not justified the research methodology chosen. I immediately began to look deeper into the study to see what I was actually trying to understand. Why did I want to find out what makes an organisation what it is and will be? I found the answer. I felt marginalised in my position at work, and wanted to comprehend why I was being marginalised. It was always about the people and relationships. If I could understand what was going on, I felt I could cope with it better.

And so I radically altered the title, and beefed up the research methodology section, focusing ever more on autoethnography. Very importantly I also began to voice my opinion of my own work in terms of how it should be taken. This was due to increasing confidence in my chosen field of research, autoethnographic research. Triangulation was gone and crystallisation took its place. I began to rebel against conventional thinking, and felt confident in doing so.

i) Being left out of the conversation: Coping with being marginalised.  
A management philosopher’s postmodern pragmatic expedition

This change in title was a knee jerk reaction to wanting my proposal accepted. When I was asked for the title name, I could not remember it, instead immediately reciting the previous one.

This title pointed to my own marginalisation of being left out of being involved when I wanted to be. Being excluded from the conversation, even at the time you are in conversation with others, dims the light of enthusiasm and takes the shine off your motivation. It’s the equivalent of being left out in the cold. ‘Pissed on and passed over’. To be honest I never felt comfortable with this title. I comforted myself by asserting that I would create a fictional company in another country with fictional staff.
Nobody would be able to identify who or what I was talking about. There was to be neither interviews nor text analysis. It was an autoethnographic study. I would be writing about my experiences of marginalisation and how I believed it came to be and would be in the future.

What was interesting is the exclusion of heuristic reflexive in the title, and the inclusion of A management philosopher’s. As I indicated I had welcomed the move to autoethnographic research methodology punctuated with heuristic insights. I no longer wanted to necessarily be confined to a research type by having it pronounced in the title. My confidence had grown to the point where I felt it legitimate to expose myself as a management philosopher. I warmed to the thought of being thought of as a management philosopher, as philosophy had been enlightening for me.

And so the reviewers signed off on the research proposal and I submitted the proposal for ethics clearance. The ethics committee questioned the meaning of reflexive and what information and right of reply I was going to give to those people I worked with and would write about.

j) What causes an organisation to be what it is and to become what it could be? A management philosopher’s postmodern pragmatic expedition

The reply of the ethics committee had given me food for thought. I must admit that when I had considered how I was going to write about my marginalisation it made me feel uneasy. I did not believe I could sufficiently disguise the people involved as it was very personal and my writing betrayed my feelings. It was then I decided that I did not want to focus on my marginalisation, nor did I want to use any particular organisation as a case study, fictionalised or otherwise. I was going to use my previous title with the inclusion of my identification as a management philosopher. I was going to merge my whole work experience, some twenty seven years, and not identify anybody, anyplace or anything, fictional or otherwise. It was a defining moment in my own development as I set out my stall. For once I put forward what I believed rather than seeking to gain acceptance. I obtained ethics clearance.

k) What causes an organisation to be what it is and to become what it could be? An edifying management philosopher’s postmodern pragmatic expedition.

I put considerable thought into what type of philosopher I wanted to be seen as. Richard Rorty gave considerable currency to what he described as an edifying philosopher. The edifying philosopher listens and questions, keeps the conversation going. My interpretation was that the edifying philosopher is in a way subversive, seeking to question official ideologies, in a sometimes playful way. I wanted to be recognised as an edifying philosopher prodding convention in the ribs, bringing to consciousness the presuppositions of management theory, facilitating the creation of new realities. There was a degree of romanticism in the image created. I was to be an edifying management philosopher.
I) What causes an organisation to be what it is and to become what it could be? A philosophical expedition

This is the final title, and represented a major breakthrough in my own development.

I had begun to struggle with the language I had used to describe myself. As an edifying management philosopher I felt ensnared by the expectations I put on myself. I began to try to fit into the role and the language running through my head changed. I looked to talk and behave in the way I imagined an edifying philosopher’s language would be. I was no longer free to be. I struggled at work to exemplify the ideal of the role I had chosen to take on. My interactions with colleagues were in a sense contrived as I fought my natural occurring language to be someone I was not.

This realization, that I had enslaved myself to a role, led me to reject all roles. I no longer wanted to be seen as an anti-realist, neo-pragmatist or edifying management philosopher. All were limiting my language and resulting actions. It would be up to others to decide what I was, to pigeon hole me, to assign a label to me. But I would not participate in this venture. I granted myself the freedom to be who I am without pre-condition. I can write in whatever style suits me at the time. I can write with passion, or be boring. I can be emotional or rational, it depends on how I feel at the time.

Above all though, I want to be ethical in my cooperative interactions. I would like my language to grant some freedom and happiness to those around me.

I explore this breakthrough, which signaled the main eureka moment of this thesis asa follows:

Following a doctoral colloquium meeting on Thursday 25 November 2005, I decided that I no longer wished to have my thinking limited by association with philosophical types.

I am attracted to postmodernism, to anti-isms, to radical approaches of understanding reality. However following discussion with my colleagues, and upon self-reflection, I now appreciate that my desire to be recognised as a postmodernist, anti-realist, neo-pragmatic, edifying management philosopher is constricting/restricting my freedom of thought. It creates unnecessary expectations.

Within the business world I have always abhorred titles. I have found them to be restrictive as we play out our roles in the business world according to our titles and other people’s expectations associated with those titles. Some may term these expectations stereotypical. So we are surprised when we meet an off-beat accountant, or a lawyer without a suit and tie. How limiting for us. The result is conformity; to be taken seriously you must adopt the official language of your role. I guess that after a while it becomes second nature, a reality. How many people question the pigeon hole into which they have been placed? How unethical is it to restrict the capacity of others to develop as they would wish, due to their title, their role. Hierarchies are particularly debilitating for those at the wrong end of it. Yet we cope by adopting to our roles and fulfilling the expectation associated with our titles. To do otherwise is to risk some form of oppression by those exercising the language of winners.
That I have categorised myself in this study is testament to the all pervasiveness of the need to identify ourselves with established roles. I now reject the premise that I should signpost my philosophical beliefs to establish the design of what follows. To this point it has been my intention to be seen as a postmodern pragmatist and this has set the context for my writing. However whether or not I would actually conform to what is expected of a postmodern pragmatist would always be someone else’s interpretation and judgement.

And so I state here quite unequivocally that my philosophical thinking, my writing style and whatever else this thesis contains is contingent; is emergent; is without design. Categorise it as you will, I no longer wish to lay claim to being any type of philosopher. What makes this study philosophical is my desire to understand the business world I inhabit. I will not be constrained nor restricted by following any particular line of philosophical thought. My thinking will emerge, as will my writing style as I continue dialogue with my colleagues, my co-workers and authors. My focus is an ethical one; to make the workplace a better place for everyone.

If I wish to use critical thinking, I will, irrespective of whether this posits a realist position or not. If I believe that reality is socially constructed through language, thereby adopting an anti-realist stand so what? NOBODY has the answers, so who am I to say what the truth is or not, or even if there is a truth? I will not say that such discussion is meaningless because we have no use for it; it has meaning for someone. Ethically I believe everyone deserves a ‘fair go’. I will not dismiss scientific approaches to management, though it will be obvious I don’t agree with it. I just want to suggest another way for us to be, which I believe will be a better way. But again I refuse to be dogmatic. You may disagree with what emerges. But if it makes you stop and think, to discuss some issues with your colleagues, maybe even inspire you to commence your own journey; that’s good enough for me.

As indicated elsewhere in this study, I have left my earlier work intact, so you can get a sense of my expedition; my voyage of discovery.

Now I believe is the right time to present you with further insight into my own thinking before concluding this thesis with how I believe an organisation could be. I state what it is about Stacey, Rorty, Bakhtin and Socrates that resonated with me. I then relate several experiences I have had in the business world before offering my opinions on the business world. I include for your information a more insightful account of the academic journey I described in my reply to the reviewers.
3.2 STACEY, RORTY, BAKHTIN, SOCRATES: A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

My development is influenced by the writing of various philosophers. I would like to let you know what it is about some of those philosophers that attracted me to them. What follows are my opinions. I do not seek to persuade you with rhetoric, nor convince you with reason. If you agree or disagree with what I have to say it does not remove the text from the page, nor change what is written. You may however engage in a dialogue with me, a vicarious interaction. Listen to the language running through your head as you read my words. If your own thinking is challenged, open yourself to the challenge, don’t dismiss what I have to say. For my part I do not for one minute assert that I am correct in what I am saying. I do not privilege any opinion as being the ‘real’ one. They are my reflections on written work. I am simply putting in text, the language running through my head as I engage in a dialogue with these authors.

I think of Professor Stacey and Professor Rorty as mavericks. This is the highest accolade possible in my vocabulary.

Stacey has broken with convention and questioned the presuppositions of management theory. He has highlighted the failure of ‘corporate programs’ and burst wide open the idea that management are in control and in charge of a system they design. Stacey openly calls into question management’s intention to find a use for management theories in a quest to find the holy grail of organisational design; the ideal system. Employees in this context are a component of the design. I am attracted to his irreverence, his desire to challenge accepted practice and to try to make organisations a better place for all workers. This ethical component to his work I find particularly valuable. Stacey does not offer solutions, he poses questions; he seeks to challenge our thinking, to offer insights.

Professor Rorty is one of the few established philosophers who made any sense to me. I particularly warmed to his pragmatic view of philosophy and his postmodern attitude. If something is of use to you, if it is good for you, then use it. Don’t waste your time discussing it or arguing about it. His privileging of language as the creator of reality I found to be challenging and non-conformist. Rorty favours anti-isms, a position defined by what it denies. He is anti-representationalist and anti-realist. Once again, as with Stacey, I am attracted to his courage, his irreverence. Rorty believes we need new vocabularies to redescribe and think usefully about what can be done to make people happier. So here lies the ethical component, as with Stacey, a desire to make things better for us all. Rorty privileges edifying philosophy over systematic philosophy. Whereas systematic philosophers want to discover a truth from the secure path of a science, edifying philosophers seek to question the presuppositions of systematic thought and stimulate counter-thoughts. The edifying philosopher acts in the tradition of the ancient Greek cynics. Poetry, lyrical writing, irony, parody are all used by the edifying philosopher to keep the conversation going. I warm to Rorty’s suggestion that the edifying philosopher can question official ideologies in a playful way, which masks the subversion.

One of my favourite philosophers is Bakhtin. Bakhtin’s writings shine a light illuminating the dark corners of official ideologies. The comedic, ironic and parodic
capacities of language are viewed by Bakhtin as subversive elements which undermine and call into question the official ideologies of the day. He makes heavy use of the carnival metaphor (carnival in medieval times), where carnival is playfully but non-violently subversive, an antidote to violence and domination; a door to dialogue. It is the imagery of his writing which resonates with me. The whole idea of the carnival, an unreal world where informality is the norm and official ideologies have no place, save to be mocked, is powerful. From Bakhtin comes the concept of menippean dialogue where there is much weight given to comedy and fantasy with little thought of a plot. Such dialogue can provoke or test any reality. There is something ethical in Bakhtin’s concept of carnival. Within the carnival we are all equal. Laws and prohibitions are suspended and there is no inequality or distance between people. Carnivals support interrelationships between people which are totally inappropriate and eccentric. I really delighted in the idea of the carnival square which in medieval times was a place where one could go to escape from dominant ideologies; where irreverence was the norm; where laughter and informality flourished; where the master/slave relationship was suspended. This reminded me of the office canteens I frequented; bastions of subversive language where there were constant challenges to the official ideologies and culture. Again I am drawn to the irreverence of Bakhtin, his disquiet with officialdom, his questioning of ideologies, his privileging of informal discourse as the vehicle for subversion.

I took an early shine to Socrates. I liked the way he provoked people to awaken their intellect. He convinced by reason which required an open debate, and was in Socrates view the only way to gain insights. Socrates had an ethical view of dialogue. The participants of a discussion had to see themselves as equals to allow for free discussion. Socrates believed that if you thought differently you would act differently. In his day Socrates too was a subversive, openly laying bare the official ideologies of the day, through his dialogues with people.

So what have these four got in common; they are unconventional and privilege language as the key to unlocking unquestioned official ideologies. The language so privileged offers a non-violent subversion of legitimate ideologies. Through their privileging of language they also, in my view, privilege cooperative interaction or relationship.

I chose them because I can relate to their writings which resonates with me and persuades me. I make no judgement as to whether they are right or wrong, only that they open up new spaces in my thinking.
3.3 MY VIGNETTES

The following stories represent changes that have occurred in my business world since commencing these studies.

3.3.1 ORDER OF THE ROUND TABLE

I have come to appreciate the importance of human interaction through language. Ethically giving people the opportunity to contribute, if they wish to, is important. This is summarised in the Australian idiom of ‘fair go’. In our work area I established the ‘order of the round table’. At 10am each morning a group consisting of myself and colleagues (all at various levels in the hierarchy), have morning tea at a round table. We have a white board which states that in order to be a member of the round table you ‘must abandon that which constrains your thought and embrace that which enables it’. This evolved from the concept of power relations, where within a group you can be both enabled and constrained in your language by the other group members. To promote the enabling power relation, each member of the ‘order of the round table’ was given the ‘privilege of the round table’. This is akin to parliamentary privilege. The individual cannot be held to account for expressing their opinion, nor can they be quoted outside of the round table. Everyone who wishes to speak is given the opportunity to do so, and each member agrees to respect what the other members have to say. Topics for discussion can be written up on the adjacent white board by any member. Membership is gained by simply verbally agreeing to the principles mentioned earlier.

Many times the conversation is light hearted and jovial. At other times we have discussed reality, the death penalty, drug abuse, the educational system etc. Personally I carry from this experience the importance of people feeling that their opinion counts and that they feel enabled to express such an opinion when it is their turn in the conversation. I appreciate our interaction and enjoy it. I recognise the feeling of camaraderie that pervades the hierarchy. I believe the other members do also as they have requested that the round table be provided for in our new premises.

Recently at a meeting of the round table one of the members made a comment concerning ‘the people that govern us’ doing so and so, rather than ‘the Government’ did so and so. This change in language was significant to me, as over some period of time I have been discussing the reification and anthropomorphisation of institutions such as organisations and governments. What this comment demonstrated was the raising to bright consciousness of an ideology. It also highlighted how such simple comments in our interaction can create heuristic moments. From this comment the following language ran through my head, some of which I discussed at the table:

I assert that organisations are people having conversations. Through discussions with current and past colleagues concerning people above us in a hierarchy, our observations are that the least human focused people seem to progress to positions of power. By reflecting on our discussion regarding the people behind government and organisations, I came to the conclusion that what made sense to me was that people who organise together continue to languish in the mental prison created by the language of Descartes, Newton and Darwin. The pervasive mechanistic paradigm favours the achievement of
outcomes through combining resources effectively and efficiently. Hierarchies offer the necessary levels of control to achieve the management created goals and are designed by management with all the necessary paraphernalia of control. The control is most needed for the people that work there. So the anthropomorphisation of organisations creates an ideology in which people belong to and are controlled by something which is inhuman – the organisation. As an inhuman construct is it any wonder that the less human focused people prosper and bathe in the inhumanity of the ideology they jealously court.

In such a scenario people are merely a human resource, human capital who serve the organisation and must honour and respect the organisation, without whom they would have little or no value to society. What a sham, designed to enslave the least powerful and favour those with power, the masters. We have lost our way and need to recapture the joy of being human beings. We should not deny the messiness (such as emotions, lack of control, the unknown) associated with being human. Why can’t we treat each other with respect and dignity in our language and honour relationship and social interaction as being important and meaningful? Why must we continually strive to be the best, most productive, most efficient whatever for an organisation that is inhuman, which often is at the expense of our own and others humanity?

I am greatly heartened by our discussions as they have emerged without provocation; I have merely taken my human interactions more seriously, increased my vocabulary and granted myself and others greater freedom in our language.

### 3.3.2 ACRIMONIOUS MEETING

Infrequently I am engaged in hostile conversations. My studies have allowed me to reflect in real time on the language being used and to be aware of the chemical reactions occurring within my own body and their link to my language, as I interact with others. In a recent hostile conversation I began to feel my heart beating as the adrenalin began to pump. This was due to the aggressive posturing and staring-in-silence of the person disagreeing with me (a bullying language). I purposively kept my language rational and unemotional but recognised that as the other person was not listening and kept repeating themself, my own emotions were kicking in, as witnessed by the chemical reactions occurring within my body. Having felt this, I decided to end the conversation, rather than raise my voice, change the tonation and engage in what would have been labelled verbal assault. Eventually the person walked away. I was annoyed by what I viewed as an unnecessary dialogue, but this quickly dissipated. By privileging language and the importance of relationship, I enabled myself to successfully cope with what could have turned out to be a much larger issue. It brought home the words of Dr. Mark Williams that in order to provide maximal happiness of those around us, we must firstly provide maximal happiness for ourselves.
3.3.3 LISTENING TO OTHERS

I have not sought any feedback on whether my own language has changed as a consequence of these studies or whether I have enabled changes in the language of others, instead allowing such interactions to emerge or not. I was driving my daughter to her friends the other day and we were discussing her experiences at work. She commented that she did not envisage me as a manager. I did not speak the same language about the people I worked with, as did the managers she reported to, who were very aware of their title and positional power.

For me this language was extremely positive. I have not deliberately set out to change my language. If it happens, it happens. For many years I have and continue to struggle with the title of manager. I don’t accept the privileging of management, nor the concept of superior/subordinate or slave/master. As indicated earlier in this thesis I abhor the use of titles and positional power. The people whom I work with are my work colleagues, whether they report to me or not. My role is to assist when asked and to ethically interact with those around me. My daughter then told me that she does not see herself as managing those trainees reporting to her and dislikes the titles, instead describing trainees as co-workers requiring assistance. To hear such language, from someone you care so much for; brought joy to my heart. That she has arrived at this position herself, without prompting or discussion with me, but as a consequence of the ordinary language I have been using freely, gives me hope that what I am doing is not a waste of time.

3.3.4 THE DOCTORAL COLLOQUIUM

It is whilst attending the weekly doctoral colloquium that I have felt most valued as a human being. This is the antithesis to how I often feel in the business world. I have reflected on why this is so.

First and foremost the power relations are different. At the doctoral colloquium I am enabled by my colleagues in our conversations. There is an equality in our relationships and interactions that is not clouded by bureaucracy or symbols of status. I willingly listen and am listened to with an open-mindedness that you can almost touch. There is mutual respect in our interactions and ethically we each have a ‘fair-go’. The setting is informal and the conversation is self-organising with no-one adhering to a pre-arranged agenda (the known).

Compare this to many of the business meetings I have attended. They are inevitably formal with a pre-distributed agenda. There is someone mandated to ‘keep the meeting on track’. I interpret this as ensuring only agenda items are discussed within the time allocated. Symbols of status abound and I am acutely aware of my position within the hierarchy. I find this environment constraining and I ensure that I say ‘the right thing’, depending on who is in attendance. That decisions have already been made on items for discussion at the meeting is not a surprise as most senior management prefer to deal with the known. Not being party to prior conversations between senior management participants means that you are often in the position of having to persuade/convince
rather than discuss issues. Often where the conversation takes a different turn, someone in charge will ensure order and cut the conversation short. There is little room for the unknown. To speak out is to invite criticism from above as being negative or not being a team player. It is often easier to keep quite, or for those climbing the corporate ladder, support senior management and offer tweaking suggestions to let them know you are contributing, as you climb each rung. In such an environment I feel suffocated. Perhaps I am too cognisant of power, but experience has taught me that the slave/master role is alive and well in most of the organisations I have worked in. People love the positional powers afforded to them and have little hesitation is using it to achieve their own agendas, often disguised as ‘organisational goals’.

Unfortunately withdrawal in such circumstances is not uncommon for the slave, resulting in a minimal contribution which diminishes the potential of human interactions and caps the transformative capacity of conversation.

3.3.5 BULLYING

Although physically I am not without presence, I have suffered at the hands of corporate bullies in the workplace during my work life. It has been a factor in my wishing for a more ethical workplace and has shaped my own actions in the way I interact with those around me. Rather than accommodating the role of the bully I actively seek to rebel against the traits of those I felt bullied by.

My experience of bullying has been to feel publicly humiliated and powerless to respond, simply because of the positional power of the person doing the bullying. Not having the vocabulary or temperament to respond was particularly frustrating; the fear of being victimised in the future was paralysing. You bite your tongue, but the taste never leaves you. You can feel emasculated by the experience, though this is more a consequence of the celluloid stereotypical male. The bully seeks to harm you, and in my case although eventually confronted by me, showed no remorse or had no problem with their actions. There was no-one for them to answer to.

I have also had to deal with bullying amongst the staff I managed. Of course there is always two sides to every story, but I have never lost sight of the fact that in any case I have been involved with, either directly or not, bullying is the domain of the master. In organisations I have never heard of nor witnessed the reverse. Bullies seem to bully because they can, and in many cases, speaking from personal experience it goes unreported. The person complaining can be perceived as not coping well or being too precious. It requires significant emotional strength to go through an official complaints process and in many cases, without independent witnesses, little will be achieved. More often than not the bully thrives as they maintain and build upon their achievements. The slave meanwhile gradually deflates in the corner offering little resistance and contributing the minimum required. Future conversations are severely constraining for the slave if the bullying master is present. The interaction is dysfunctional, however this is never addressed as management privileges outcomes not relationships. It is the squeaky wheel syndrome. If there is no noise everything must be going well. How do you cope as the slave? You leave, find refuge with those around you or withdraw. I sought to understand through education and reflection. With my increased vocabulary I have been able to redescribe my own situation and make sense of it.
3.3.6 CREATING AN IMPRESSION

One of the most irritating aspects of interacting with those above me in the hierarchy is that most of these people seek to imprint upon you their value. There was a female director who every time I sought to converse with her informally, looked at her watch. This indicated that she was always busy. To support this perception, although the organisation was small, you had to contact her secretary to make an appointment. It was virtually impossible to talk to this woman, unless she wanted to talk to you. This apparently stage managed show created the impression that this lady was very important and very busy. She exerted complete control over her staff, having irreverent managers fill in time sheets for their whole day, least they forget who is the boss. What was perplexing was that outside of work she was more approachable and even likeable. The role she chose to play inside work was focused on career progression with little regard for those of no consequence to that end. Of course interactions with this person were constrained, and the relationships were kept formal. The master was truly in control of the slave.

Shortly after transferring to a new job, I had a conversation with the managing director. I had previously been working with a holding company which included in their books this organisation. The managing director did not seek to hide his contempt for me, due to his personal issues with the directors of the holding company. He used his position to ensure that I was in no way to misunderstand that he was the boss and that what he said goes. I was forced to bite my tongue on many occasions and had to toe the line. The hierarchical management pyramid ensured that I could not speak out, without personal harm. Nothing in that company changed. Nobody contributed, leaving this up to the executive team. We learnt to be helpless, to fill the role of the slave, to be thankful for the crumbs of praise falling from the table of the masters as they discussed the future of their company. There was no meaningful interaction and no relationship to speak of between masters and slaves. The conversation was very constrained, the people outside the executive merely cogs in the machine. The executive were responsible for all successes and the staff for all the failures. The executive even had their own toilets and put as much distance as possible between themselves and the staff.

Compare this to the one boss I had that I respected. What were the differences? The company was small and the owner was the boss. Talking to him was like having a chat over a coffee. He was very approachable and seemingly always pleased to see you. The staff appreciated his banter and he had a good sense of humour. He did not stand on formality and was willing to listen to any ideas you might have. He was straight with you in his feedback, but always supportive. In essence his humanness enabled the people around him. He did not seek to impose authority by virtue of a hierarchy. He sought to earn respect, not demand it because of who he was. He had good relationships with those around him and there was a good morale in the business. He diluted the strength of the master/slave relationship in the way he conversed with you.

In the main the impression created in organisations I have worked for is that the them/us, master/slave is very much alive and well. This impression has been strengthened by the plethora of corporate programs thrust upon on unsuspecting staff population. These programs are a means to an end, the end being the achievement of
the desired outcomes, where such outcomes are desired by the management. I have participated in cognitive programs designed to provide me with an American type mentality of goal achievement where everything that happens does so because of your attitude, it does of course privilege the individual. My performance has been measured against observable behaviours, where wanted behaviours are subtly woven into the corporate values by those who believe they run the show. I have a healthy scepticism when it comes to slick professionally packaged training programs, particularly from the celebrity culture of America. When I was growing up we viewed much of the material from America as bullshit. This is of course a generalisation, but nevertheless the early indoctrination leaves its mark and in many cases is proved correct.

For me, such programs enforce the slave/master ethic. They teach us that there are better ways for us to fit in, to get on and to not be left behind. Undoubtedly such programs may work for some people, but I am more interested in the presuppositions underlying the theories from whence these miracle programs emerged. They are based on privileging the individual and on management being what causes organisations to be what they are and will become. More and more I can detect that certain types of people are wanted for organisations, people that fit in with corporate values for example. Be like us or don’t be with us. What has happened to diversity, to questioning, to difference? They are welcomed of course as long as you don’t question or be different or diverse in thought.

Such corporate programs are approved by the top layers of management. Their pervasiveness in performance management ensures they are constantly re-inforced at all levels of a hierarchy. It all goes back to a belief that management set the goals for us all and then design the organisation that will achieve those goals. Increasingly that design includes specifying not the type of people required but the attitudes and behaviours necessary from those people.

The people that succeed (where success is viewed as climbing the corporate ladder) are those that display the required attitudes and behaviours. How are these communicated? Through language, but you must be prepared to play that language game. You must be prepared to undertake a role that may be contrary to how you are. That some people ease into such a role without any discernable effort is testament to the chameleon nature of those that succeed. Why not if it works for them? To use an Australian idiom, ‘good on them’. What they succeed in doing is filling the role of the slave. Those that don’t engage in the language game; are left behind; in situ; transferred; largely ignored; a thorn in the side; an example of people that have stopped learning; tolerated. When I have tried to create the right impression, enter the language game, I have been betrayed by my language. I am unable to disguise my feelings sufficiently and verbal bullshit rests uneasily in my throat. So what impression do I create? A rebel without a cause? A malcontent, whiteanting corporate programmes, being too negative? That is for others to answer and through their interaction with me surfaces their impression/perception.

Despite providing excellent performance with no issues, it is the messiness of human communication that serves to promote or not our worthiness to succeed. If you don’t talk the right way, if your language is unacceptable to what is required then no matter what actions you take your success will be measured in small incremental steps over a period of time. Meanwhile the less competent but more communicatively attuned
candidate soars over the mediocre to sit at the right hand of he/she who must be obeyed. Not for them being glued to a computer screen, keeping the machine turning over. They will join the decision makers, the designers of futures, the networking clan whose tribes gather regularly to feed each others egos in plush surroundings at the corporate expense. So who is right? Is there anybody doing anything wrong? Well ethically yes if there is harm being done to anybody as a consequence of this played out charade. I have witnessed and experienced the marginalisation that results from not playing the language game. I increasingly believe that marginalisation within groups of working people occurs due to a lack of communication. The marginalised person feels constrained in their communication and typically they are not at the top of the hierarchy, but are subject to it. They have no voice and their opinion is not sought nor given. My performance was exemplary, yet it was on perceived personal attributes that my progress was halted. Feedback was never direct from the source, rather it was always third hand. People in the shadows found fault with my language or attitude yet failed to materialise in front of me to convey their issues, instead preferring to deliver their poisoned arrow through my boss. No specific issues were ever identified and words used to describe me were ‘tactless’ and other generalities. That such impressions existed in the executive made it extremely difficult to address or overcome. In such situations you feel powerless. It is like banging your head against a brick wall. Time and time again, despite your best efforts you can be judged at a distance. This impresses upon me the messiness with which human emotion and action is associated.

Much of what I have experienced in human relationships/interaction with those above me is illusionary. Like the gifted magician who makes elephants disappear before your eyes, gifted communicators make you believe they are superior to you and speak with positional power, which constrains the slaves ability to dispute the rule of the few. Such masters grant maximal freedom to themselves; because they can.

3.3.7 PHYSICAL DIFFERENCES

In all the organisations I have worked for there have always been physical barriers between senior management and employees, reinforcing the us/them divide and ensuring that both slave and master know their place. Team building is paramount in many organisations, yet we continue to passively accept the physical differences that ensure the slave and master remain at polar opposites.

In one organisation I worked for the executive had their own toilets. I must admit that for 80% of my work life I enjoyed the privacy of an office. When I was finally required to work in open plan with the rest of the staff, I found it a great invasion of privacy. The senior management, who introduced the open plan, retained their offices. Senior management had their own car park spaces and were provided with cars, whether their duties required one or not. Senior executives got to go on exotic trips, have numerous work lunches and kick their heels up under the thinly disguised veil of networking, all at the corporations expense.

Meanwhile those less worthy remained at the office, no doubt feeling they should be pleased just to have a job, staring passively from behind their work stations.
How can you expect to overcome the us/them master/slave interaction where you have such inequities staring each person in the face every day. Remuneration is invisible, physical differences are not. Ask yourself who do you interact most freely and enjoyably with? I bet it is likely to include those people with whom you share the most in common, the people sharing your work space (another generalisation, but you get the point).

When the time then comes to interact with senior management in meetings etc, you are unlikely to have been actively interacting with them and been party to their conversations. They will be discussing issues with you, that they have more than likely talked to each other about in their own get togethers. If you don’t agree with what is being said, you must persuade and convince those senior management in a language they appreciate. You must know your place and act accordingly. To be a senior manager you must adopt the language of the senior manager. In my experience people promote those most like them. Although they verbally promote diversity and the desire to be challenged, it must be on their terms and you must play by their rules. To be welcomed into the senior management collective you must lose part of your own identity. Only then can you truly be assimilated. Once in the collective you will be party to the conversations that guide us all. You will gain unique insights into problematic people in the organisation and you form great sympathy for your peers. Your reality will change, as indeed you will. I have seen this change occur many times as staff climb the corporate ladder. I have often asked myself that if I ever did occupy a position of positional power would I change into the person that it was necessary to be to get that position in the first place?
From my own business world experiences and my interactions with numerous staff I have noted how we all cope with life in the business world, a world where many are consigned to the role of a slave. When those in power don’t like you there is little you can do to change their minds. All too easily your actions, whatever they are, in some way reinforce the prejudices held by those with power over you. I have even had derogatory statements made by others in meetings I attended, attributed to me because of course it was typical of something I would say.

Coping can take many guises. You can withdraw from the business world; become a workstation hermit whose only interaction is with your computer. Such staff usually get assigned to special projects, or God’s waiting room. That such staff disappear into the background can prove a good result for those in power, particularly if the staff member has been a thorn in the side. Unfortunately their performance can suffer as the self-esteem of the person deteriorates and this can be used to eventually take formal action against the staff member. I have witnessed this occurring. Of course the person is viewed as being unable to cope and obviously suffering from stress. The individualist cultures I have lived in take the position that stress is the problem of the individual; the individual is unable to cope. I have seen many work environments where dysfunctional human interactions cause great stress, usually to the less powerful in the relationship. Of course we don’t talk about it. Some of the worst givers of stress have been the fastest promoted. They get results. At the end of the day is that not what senior management want? Yet they present themselves as caring, sharing, tree-hugging people who desperately want their extended family to be happy, innovative, creative and well adjusted people. Within your own peer groups you can certainly create your own reality which you re-inforce each and every day.

Others may choose to subvert senior management programmes through the use of one or all of humour, irony, parody and sarcasm. Informal social networks are utilised to spread the word. There is more of the same old stuff on the way. It’s all a great waste of time and money and will never work. Senior management can be caricatured and their mannerisms exaggerated in much the same way as a newspaper comic artist hones in to exploit a given context. That senior management seem to remain blissfully unaware of why hugely expensive programmes fail is testament to the plastic bubble they build around themselves and live in. The person(s) subverting the programmes are usually well respected amongst the staff, a fact that will never show up in any organisational chart.

To cope with being left out of the conversation, other staff may focus their efforts elsewhere. They will study or run a separate business during office hours. Work becomes a means to an end. I believe that we spend so much of our life at work that it should mean more to us than this. Such staff do their own jobs competently, work exactly the required number of hours, volunteer infrequently and sparingly attend staff social functions. They are emotionally disengaged from the business world. Their reality lies elsewhere. Such people are seen by management as requiring training or counselling (the latter is used more frequently than you might think). The commonly held view is that the problem lies with the individual after all it could not possibly be a human relationship or social issue. Training programmes are designed to assist the
individual to become a more productive corporate citizen whose behaviours should
become more acceptable to those in power.

Then there are those ambitious staff who want to succeed on their own terms. They will
try to impress with their productivity and excellence in work. They will study and seek
work in the furtherance of their career. But you know what? Unless they learn the
language of senior management and unless they play by their rules, frustration is all that
awaits. While these people may have much to offer, they are dragged down and
steamrolled by people in power with a personal dislike for them. Eventually, as I have
experienced, like a bucking bronco or a wilful dog, they will submit or leave (leaving is
always used as the ultimatum – if you don’t like it here why don’t you leave. This
presupposes that this is a viable option for the person and their family. Unless you are
aware of their personal circumstances and have an intimate knowledge of the human
being how can this possibly be voiced as a choice). In their submission the pilot light is
extinguished and the business world is a colder/darker place because of it.

Coping in my experience is largely a case of keeping your head down, doing your work
and looking forward to something outside of the business world. Many people I have
worked with do their jobs conscientiously, but only come to life when conversing with
their colleagues. They rarely come to the attention of senior management and
consequently receive no plaudits. This is the squeaky wheel syndrome. Because
nothing apparently happens in their area (usually finance) it is paid no attention. Often
nothing happens because the work is being done. I believe this anonymity
disadvantages the people in these positions and ensures their careers go nowhere. I
have remarked to those I have worked with that we would probably get paid more if we
stuffed up more often, just to bring to the attention of senior management the
importance of the work done. However such staff remain off the radar of what is
important. They typically operate in what is now termed a non-core part of the
business, which I translate as to not very important part of the business. The
terminology is important, it is how we create our realities. Non-core activities can
always be outsourced. What such narrow vision illustrates is the level of ignorance
regarding the importance of human interaction. People are not valued for their ability to
interact with others, to keep morale high, to get the work done in spite of policies and
procedures. If you inadvertently disrupt the fragile human connections the outcome can
be totally unexpected. I believe this is why so many takeovers fail to produce what is
expected. No awareness of existing relationships and their importance leads to
interaction problems. Having excellent policies and procedures ignores the ordinariness
of people. So is it any wonder that such people concentrate on getting their work done,
engaging in conversation with their colleagues in informal gatherings and largely
shielding themselves from the business world spinning
around them

Meanwhile the privileged few are fully engaged in the business world. It is after all
where they rule and where they are treated like kings and queens, princes and
princesses. For them the business world has value and can even be an enjoyable place
to be. For many it is a place of work where enjoyment is in interacting with the people
around you, people by and large with whom you are on level power relation basis.
ME AS MANAGER

I have occupied the position of manager for some twenty seven years which has placed me in a position of power over staff. Least you suspect that I walk on water I have always favoured employing staff that I liked. Even when your recruitment decision making is on the face of it objective and subject to rigorous procedural planning and analysis, you still manage to get the person you want. I have always valued the social interaction with the people I work with. Of course there have been times I have had people I did not like working with me, and I excluded them from the conversation – because I could. Happily over the twenty seven year period these instances have been few. Mostly I have enjoyed a good relationship. I did like having my own office, and would gratefully have accepted car parking bays, overseas trips and the like. Yet I am positioning myself as commenting that these physical differences compound the master/slave relationship. I can only say that I have changed/matured/become more aware over time.

There in no doubt that I have changed as a manager over my work life to date. Much of this change has been occasioned by my exposure to higher education. It is through awareness and exposure to great thinkers that I have questioned my own relationship ethics and sought to improve them. I now do not like to be called a manager. I hate being introduced as someone’s boss. I am neither. I simply use my experience and skills to facilitate the work life of those around me. I now take seriously my interaction with people through language, believing that it is through this cooperative interaction that our realities emerge. People need space to express themselves and you need to relinquish outdated control thinking which supports a master/slave relationship and diminishes the humanity of all parties.

Much like reclaimed land, organisations, hierarchies, job titles etc. are contrived forms. In evolutionary terms they have only been with us for fractions of a second. Who is to say they are appropriate for the human condition. Organisations are reified and anthropomorphised by us so that the business world becomes a separate world, a world where we can create new realities and where some can divest themselves of the ethics associated with being a human being amongst other humans and undertake the role of a corporate pariah, a shark. By becoming aware of fundamental questions concerning mainstream management theories, such as the privileging of the individual, one can re-examine and perhaps redescribe one’s position in the business world, and in particular one’s interaction with others.

I am now much more focused on maintaining an ethical relationship with the people I interact with. I seek to engage people in conversations that enable them rather than constrain them, and hopefully to make the work experience more enjoyable. Of course I can only go so far as I lie in the middle of a hierarchy and I am subjected regularly to the rule to those above me. Being a middle manager you can be both slave and master. I seek to understand my position as a slave so that I might break the slave/master relationship with those subjected to my position in the hierarchy.

In my own work practices I have begun to use the language of freedom in open forums. This is as much to ‘see how it feels’ for myself as it is to create a consciousness of a different discourse type from the dominant management discourse. I have begun to
introduce myself as someone who works with others, rather than a manager. This feels right as I react to my own words. I fit comfortably with that expression of freedom (freedom being released from conventions which have master type ideologies embedded in them, disguised to such an extent that they are naturalised and common-sense). I no longer wear a tie as I find them uncomfortable, however the reaction I get never ceases to amaze me. It is as if I no longer take my work seriously or that I am on leave. What nonsense and a clear example of conditioning by a dominant ideology. I talk to the people I work with about my views on hierarchies in the workplace. I don’t believe in them, nor the titles that go with them. Rather I offer my skills and expertise to sort out any problems, issues we may have, and to act as a negotiator on our behalf to get the resources we need. I try to treat the people around me as adults, and pay particular attention to the language used in our interactions. I privilege informal interaction as that with which I feel most at ease; most human. I would like to grant as much freedom as possible to those around me in the hope that they will gain an insight into the business world they inhabit and begin to understand that there is an alternative view. If that consciousness can be raised then perhaps our practice will change, leading to more enjoyment.

Through being more aware of my own language and openly engaging others, I have claimed some freedom for myself. I now realise that irrespective of the dominant ideologies there is room for difference; there is opportunity to escape the shackles of convention. If you change your language, you change your interaction with others. If such change resonates with them; if it makes sense to them; if they are persuaded by it, then the local interactions we have can become global. Maybe not immediately, but eventually. Having been marginalised; having embarked on a voyage of discovery to understand the business world where that marginalisation occurred, I believe I can be a catalyst for ethical change, emancipating others through the discourse of freedom, raising consciousness of the importance of language and human interaction.

3.3.10 ORDINARINESS

If you suspect that I have set myself out as someone different, belay that thought. Elsewhere in this study I have told you that I do not wish to be categorised either in thought or in style. I am what I am, and can change depending on the context.

I used to think that you had to have something which made you stand out from the crowd. You had to set goals, be a winner, an achiever; only then could you stand tall and be admired. Perhaps maturity, life experience and education have taught me that I am an ordinary person, in a world full of ordinary people. We interact through ordinary conversation. Instead of trying to be different we should be more aware of our ordinariness and concentrate on our relationships with others. There will always be differences and diversity, we cannot grow without them. However the difference and diversity I refer to occur as part of who we are, rather than a contrived illusion.

Life is messy, no matter how hard we seek to control it. I am full of emotions, both good and bad, that can be triggered by other people. I make and will continue to make mistakes in my interactions with others. I refuse to be disabled emotionally by playing a role whose purpose is to display more acceptable behaviour. What I am trying to do is to be more ethical in my interactions, more attentive to my language and that of others I interact with, more aware of categorisations and labelling and above all I want to
facilitate dialogue between people so that we might create a more meaningful business world reality together.

3.4 MY OPINIONS OF THE BUSINESS WORLD

So what do I think about organisations? A good analogy for me is medieval times when there were Kings, Queens and subjects. Rulers and the ruled. Royalty lived the good life, while the subjects had to be thankful for what they had through the benevolence of the rulers. In today’s organisations only the few get to be princes and princesses, while others, subject to their rule, cope as best they can whilst aspiring to be inculcated into royalty. Those subjects wishing to become rulers must appear to be competitive, ambitious, productive and positive, to mention only a few of the required characteristics. They must ‘talk the talk’. Royalty in the business world is not bequeathed via heredity. Rather it is assumed by the hierarchical position occupied by the person. I have occupied the position of middle manager for twenty seven years; never quite wanting to ‘talk the talk’ required to become part of the senior management gang.

Before I continue I feel it is only fair to make known to you my disillusion with the business world and by implication their rulers. I abhor the propensity of the media to attribute actions to organisations. Companies are merely pieces of paper. The last time I checked a piece of paper was incapable of any independent action. It is people who carry out actions. It is people who decide to open up new markets for cigarettes in Asia, already knowing full well the deadly consequences to those societies occasioned by the products they sell and promote. It is people who decide litigation strategies that deny the plaintiff justice by virtue of the plaintiff’s timely and guaranteed death due to exposure/consumption of the defendant’s toxic products. It is people who actively market junk food to children, knowing full well the consequences of over indulgence in their products. It is people who actively promote alcohol as a necessity for enjoying yourself, knowing full well the social cost of alcohol abuse. People create needs for other people through manipulative techniques and methods. We have managed in Western countries to become consumer societies where people with money are valued, and their counsel sought. We are all headed to the nothingness; the void of celebrity culture.

Our children, the future of humanity, are treated as consumer units. The earlier we hook them, the greater the likelihood they will buy our products/services in the future. And what of their education; their capacity to call a halt to the endless manipulation by other people? Education standards are continually being lowered, particularly with the idiotic concept of outcomes based education. Whoever thought this one through is truly divorced from any sense of pragmatic thought. Universities are dumbing down to accommodate an increasingly illiterate population. Lacking sufficient funding they must in turn become a business. This crossover between education and business I find disturbing. One hopes that education provides a light for the future, an escape from the gutter of self-serving interests where society is merely the name of another marketplace. Extinguish that light and one frets for what people will do to people in the future.

There is far too much window dressing in society. People regularly dump toxic waste, regularly pollute our atmosphere, regularly privilege profit over the interests of other people; regularly restrict access to life saving medication, routinely destroy stocks of
food to maintain price levels whilst millions of people suffer malnutrition. Yet we have never heard so much about corporate responsibility; corporate social responsibility, triple bottom line accounting, ethics etc. I get the feeling they are given lip service, seen as yet another marketing tool to impress the shareholder and make society sleep better at night time.

So yes, I am sceptical, but not naïve enough to assume that it is all bad. There are well meaning people in positions of power, just not enough of them.

In my 27 years of management experience I have witnessed first hand the difference between what people say they are doing, and what they are actually doing. Self-interest is a common theme, with many hidden personal agendas guiding apparently rationale decision making. Talking-the-talk is very important for career progression. If you fail to grasp the culture of the people you are working with early on, if you fail to listen to their language (language being the expression of their bodies, including but not limited to tone of voice, dress, body language), in short if you cannot become like them, then in the absence of market need, you may be doomed to languish with ‘the others’ in the bowels of your shared business accommodation, trapped in a psychic prison. But ask any senior manager what type of people they want and near the top will be diverse thinkers, people who challenge the status quo, lateral thinkers. No where will you hear ‘people like me’. However as I and many others know, this is more often the path to promotion. By not following the official ideologies, by questioning what is actually going on, by being a diverse thinker using different language, you risk being marginalized, being left out of conversations, missing your turn to contribute. Eventually such people switch off, become emotionally disengaged and because their self-esteem is lowered are not in a position to change jobs easily. Their contribution is limited to what has to be done. And then lo and behold if management doesn’t criticize these people for their attitude and cynicism, further compounding the issue. I have witnessed bullying by people in positions of authority, though no-one other than the people on the receiving end would call it as such. The results have been depression, early retirement or complete withdrawal. We are fearful of exposing hypocrisy, fearful of saying how things are actually being done. Why?

Human interaction is not privileged in many ‘organisations’. Witness the attachment of workers to their own workspace and their computer. Nowadays people communicate via their computers, so they don’t need to get up and have face-to-face contact. Perhaps if we bring our children up that way, by distance through technology, they will develop into…What? Human social interaction is a prerequisite for humanity. This has been covered in this study.

In many instances I have been required to spend 80% of my day in front of a computer. How soul destroying is that? It is questioned? Does anybody care as long as the work gets done? Isn’t it my problem anyway? If I don’t like it can’t I always leave? Over the years I have noticed an increasing tendency to individualise problems. If you are stressed it is your problem, you just can’t cope. Other people in the organisation will get you help. If you can’t deal with your boss you probably need assertiveness training, as this points to a lack of skill on your part. If you can’t get your work completed on time, you probably need time management training or delegation skills training. People working together privilege the individual, not the social. This is because of the way we
describe ‘organisations’ and the language we use that creates that particular reality for each of us.

Until such time as we privilege human interaction, relationship, cooperative interaction; until such time as we break free from Cartesian thinking, from privileging scientific thought, from self-interest, from hypocrisy; only then can we start to imagine a different way for organisations to be. Only then can we redescribe our reality and change the language running through our heads.

So there you have it, in summary why I want to understand what is actually going on in ‘organisations’, and how it could be a better place for us to work in. I would now like to explore the academic journey I have taken which has resulted in my being able to conceptualise and describe the issues that have concerned me for some time.
3.5 WHAT LEARNING MEANS TO ME:

Earlier in my reply to the reviewers I presented an account of my academic journey. This provides a blank canvas of who I am, and why I have undertaken these studies. Now I wish to paint the picture adding colour; feelings and my own thoughts regarding organisations. This is a precursor for what follows. Perhaps if you have a better understanding of who I am, you will get a better appreciation of this thesis.

I was fortunate, thanks to my parents, to belong to the middle classes meaning I grew up in an area with people who were less likely to approve of violent behaviour and less likely to participate in illegal activities (drugs, thieving etc). At school we (my friends and I) were taught by rote. Discipline was administered fairly, most of the time, and schooling was towards one end, passing your final examination. There was no room for art of any kind; we left school bereft of any artistic inclination. As students we were mercenary. We chose courses at university that were a means to an end, the end being money. No thought was given to what interested us. This mercenary approach to education was perpetuated by the language of the educational authorities whose focus was on the interests of business. One can understand this as people need to get work, to make money, to live. There was an underlying conventionality in my early education, perpetuating a will to conform, to accept, to go through life unquestioning of people in authority; the rulers. In a sense such ideologies are present in many religions where some people are in a better position ‘to know’ than others, and such others must accept the faith espoused by the rulers in order to escape the confines of human form, in the next life.

Education remained a means to an end for me until very recently.

I enrolled to do a degree in commerce, believing this was the best way to get a job. Certain aspects of commerce appealed to me, but much bored me to distraction. This made studying for exams particularly onerous. Coupled with exam nerves the academic experience was not a good one. However this was more than made up for by the social interaction I enjoyed with my fellow students. When I left university I was shocked by the difference between what I had imagined the business world to be, and what it actually was. University had not prepared me for the political nature of organisations. University had not prepared me for the ineffective and inefficient work practices I encountered. University had not prepared me for the reaction a graduate receives when they suggest doing things differently.

I learnt quickly to conform, to put my opinions to one side whilst in the presence of a superior being. My education had only begun in a practical sense. How you interacted with the people around you was the key to success. My rebellious nature however precluded saying and doing the right thing. I was unable to fool myself. My language betrayed my unease with being superficially affirmative towards people with positional power to further my own ends. Instead I believed that I could advance on merit, and in particular through educational development. Whilst employed in the computing industry I undertook studies in computer programming; in the finance industry I undertook studies for admission to related professional associations; whilst in the investment industry I undertook studies also for admission to related professional associations.
The qualifications built up and increasingly I became frustrated by the absence of a payoff. These studies were after all eminently practical. They were functional, not altogether enjoyable and like my commerce degree required considerable effort to complete. My career was stagnant. I kept to my Platonic ideals that if only I had more qualifications I could kick start my progress upwards. Then I decided that I needed to become a CPA. But I hesitated. My experiences with exams for professional memberships have been difficult, due to my lack of joy with the subject matter. It was functional, scientific and impossibly conventional. Interaction with fellow students was non-existent as everyone worked, had little time, and was pursuing the qualification rather than the content. The focus was on the destination, not the journey.

I decided to go back to university and do a Master of Business Administration. This would surely be the means by which I would progress. To ensure I did not completely eliminate the possibility of commencing the CPA programme I completed the three units necessary to do so. Then something happened that was to change me, and allow me for the first time to follow a path of interest rather than seeming necessity.

Before moving on, I would like to take a moment to reflect on my education as related so far through this text. You may get the impression that I feel it was a waste of time, and I must admit this language has run through my head on many occasions. I have found that I need to be challenged in the work I do. It’s not that I get bored easily or that I’m not prepared to do boring work. It is being in a role with well defined boundaries for too long leading to repetition and blocking of intellectual stimulation that is suffocating. Studying has provided a means for me to develop intellectually, long after such development ceases in a role played past its use by date. In this sense studying has allowed me to cope with work life. Now back to what changed my view of education as a means to an end, and as a coping mechanism.

When I commenced the business strategy unit of my MBA, I expected the usual conventional preaching regarding mission, vision, strategies, models etc that would arm me with tools to impress with at work. That’s not what I got. I was awoken from my slumber by the work of Professor Ralph Stacey. Professor Stacey is a management philosopher. The university had the courage to structure a course based on Professor Stacey’s writings. Here for the first time was a voice with which I could happily shout in unison. Someone who lifted the veil of organizational hypocrisy and exposed the frailties of conventional management thinking. I was emotionally engaged, perhaps for the first time in my many years of studying. I wanted to find out more, to explore, to understand, to discuss. The remainder of my MBA flowed from this eureka moment as my subject choices were concentrated on strategy. My lecturers indulged my new found enthusiasm for chaos and complexity theory, occasioned by the work of Professor Stacey. The unit Organisational behaviour was also to expose me for the first time to the concept of reality and social constructionism.

Following completion of my MBA, having specialized in strategy, a promotion opportunity arose as a strategy professional was being sought. I applied, but did not get an interview. It was disappointing, but the difference this time was that I had appreciated the academic journey, irrespective of the end. I had ceased to be an academic mercenary, ceased to view education as something I did to make up for
repetitive work. Education had become an end in itself. The difference was that at last I was seeking to study out of interest rather than seeming necessity.

The leap to a PhD was not that great having made this breakthrough. This PhD is for me. It was my opportunity to study what interested me, to embark on a voyage not being concerned about the destination. It would give me the chance to explore the thinking behind mainstream management thinking and to develop my own concept of what an organization could be. Prior to applying to do a PhD I took a year off to read. This I did daily, with an unquenchable thirst. I enjoyed every minute of it. This joy of reading is not something I experienced previously. I always viewed books as items of study and I could not relax as very few of my text books interested me. Since commencing my PhD I have now discovered the joy of writing. With the assistance of Dr. Mark Williams I have found my authorial voice and a love of philosophy. I am enjoying the experience. I only wish that all education could be encountered as such.

The common themes emerging in what I have written are a disillusion with rulers in business and the prostitution of education to the needs of those rulers. As long as education is talked about as a means to an end, what joy will it bring, what contribution will it make to the questioning of conventional thinking.

And so you should be getting a clearer picture of who I am. I have been smothered by conventionality and conformity for too many years. I want to break free of the chains that have restricted my freedom of expression. I want to call into doubt the seeming certainty with which management operates. I want to question the underlying presuppositions of management theory and I want to explore if there is a better way for people to interact in the business world.
3.6 WHAT THE ORGANISATION COULD BE

As I stare at the blank canvas in front of me I ponder on what it is I want to say. During this voyage my authorial self has been unleashed. Unfettered by roles, categorizations or labels I now write without focus on style or structure content, without fear of boundaries or being accepted. This is my freedom.

Having raised to bright consciousness the presuppositions of management theory; having related my own prejudices towards management created through my life experiences, I now want to discuss with you how I believe an organisation (remember I dislike that word but merely use it for convenience) could be.

I don’t believe we can escape ideologies, we can only evolve new ones. Ideologies cannot be eliminated; they can only be brought to bright consciousness and replaced through re-description with new language running through our heads, which we share together as we interact cooperatively. New conventions will take root and new ideologies will flower. In this sense we are all enslaved by convention. What is important is bringing to consciousness the ideologies we serve. Through understanding we can question; through re-description we can change the language running through our heads. I posit that language is the transformative cause of change. Cooperative action through language creates the joy or dread of being in the business world. Happy healthy relationships will bring us contentment. I privilege relationship as being the single most important aspect of being a human. An organisation is a gathering of humans interacting cooperatively through language. This is not an it, a thing or a person. People are what matter, not profitability or productivity. These are merely consequences of having people working together.

I no longer demean scientific management and its related language. Dogmatism breeds arrogance; the arrogance of knowing the truth, the best way. I am not dogmatic, what I propose makes sense to me, but I don’t position it as the answer to anything. It’s my point of view, agree or disagree you can’t change that. Many people accept the convention associated with hierarchies and bureaucracies and are seemingly pleased to do so. Many thrive with this ideology. Who am I to say they are ignorant or mistaken? What I want to do is make sense of my own participation in the business world. What makes sense to me may be heresy to you, but I honour your right to make sense of your own experience. Where we may differ all we can hope is that we can grant each other as much freedom as possible.

There is no ideal organisation. It would be naïve in the extreme to believe that anything will change because I have proposed what I think is a better way to be. For certain however I have changed and this is reflected in my language and interaction with others. Every day I interact with other people in the workplace; perhaps through my language others will change and learn to re-describe their business world. Others may discover the importance of relationship and language and begin to take seriously the quality of their interactions. Although such local changes in language may be barely discernable, global changes may emerge through amplification of small differences. I say may emerge because language is self-organising, it cannot be effectively controlled; that is its beauty; its inherent freedom. The reality we create in our local interactions may surface a better way to be, that brings to the consciousness of others a better way to be,
and then from others to others and so on. This is all we can hope for. There is no overthrow of existing ideologies, no liberation of those with less power, the marginalized, no immediacy of freedom from enslavement. We can through our own informal local interactions create realities through our language in cooperative interaction with others. We can grant maximal freedom to ourselves and then to others. If our relationships improve as a result we will be better able to cope with any oppression from those in power. Can we hope to change them? Who knows it may emerge in time, but I bet only if they see an increase in profitability or productivity caused by privileging cooperative interaction through language.

Unlike Stacey I do believe that free conversation can be promoted in an organisation. I have not abandoned my dialogical continuum model (Figure 4) that I worked so hard to conceptualise, I have just chosen not to be confined by the boundaries I set. I do believe in the transformative power of conversation and I am aware of the enabling and constraining power relations therein. For me informal conversation is what enables and gives life to free conversation. If you have a good relationship with those around you, you can be enabled to engage in a free flow of conversation. **Relationship, rather that communicative competence is the key to transformative dialogue.** Subversion of official ideologies through comedy, irony or parody is more likely to occur where there is cooperative interaction between the participants engaged in dialogue. I no longer believe that we have to adopt roles to engage in such conversations, in fact the opposite; we should abandon the playing of roles and simply be as we are at the time of our interaction. Informal conversation is more likely to occur in informal settings. Formal settings smother us with the dominant official ideologies through language and are suited for those with the most power. Formal dialogue, such as in performance reviews and meetings is constraining. Dialogue must be more democratic to achieve change, people must feel enabled to participate freely, each must have a fair go. This is more likely where there is a good relationship between the people. Conversation as a transformative cause of change may be best served if the conventions in which ideologies are embedded are brought to the consciousness of participants and discussed. Both master and slave have to take more seriously their participation in conversations and seek to find a better way to be. The key is to improve cooperative interaction through language.

So what can be done? All great journeys start with a single step. You have to abandon any idealistic tendencies and use that which seeks to dominate. Management must be persuaded to change the workplace to enable informal conversation. The workplace design is important, and the need to control people through design should be jettisoned from the business world. How many of us only get to interact with those in our immediate work space, who are mostly engaged in the same type of work? Each tribe will create their own business worlds together, which are usually very different from other departmental tribes. This gives rise to the well known ‘silo’ effect. Workplaces should give rise to ad-hoc, informal interactions. This is more likely where the workplace provides informal settings. Café style meeting rooms with round tables and access to facilities are a start. Mobile technology allows people greater freedom to interact with others, face-to-face. Humans need human contact. My belief is that electronic communication is a poor substitute for language shared between people in direct contact. Language is so much more that just the verbal utterance. It incorporates intonation, feelings, dress, volume, body language. It is the expression of the self towards others and others expression to the self. Cooperative interaction is through
language. Electronic text can never substitute for human contact; and we need human contact. We are biologically predisposed to contact with other humans. We are social beings, creating and being created by our relationships with other humans.

We should not be tethered to our workplaces by the length of an electronic cable. We should be free to move around and engage with other people, irrespective of their location within the building. Why not have actual cafés, they are always a great place for discussion. Management can be convinced by the argument of flexibility and creativity to consider such options. I am more interested in the potential for informal gatherings where free conversation can evolve, changing the language running through our heads and creating new realities.

If the workplace is changed to facilitate interaction and conversation, for whatever managerialist reason, the rest is up to us. Nobody can control our conversations. Yet if we understand conversations as the transformative cause of change, change can occur in our informal local interactions despite the best efforts of management to police and control the human resource.

I privilege the informal as a more natural way to be. So the people in power would have to provide for more informal contact allowing conversation to bloom. This would mean letting go of control, but even if those in power do nothing, we can in our own interactions privilege the informal. This is a critical observation. Language is self-organising; it cannot be controlled. Therefore it is within each of us to improve relationships with those around us and to be the better way I am proposing. Nothing has to be mandated by management; much can be achieved in our own local interactions.

My more radial suggestions get to the nub of an ethical workplace and would involve significant turnaround in the hearts and minds of those in power. But if we don’t discuss these issues, for certain nothing will ever happen. I abhor hierarchies and the conventions supporting positional power. Such a false structure, whose main purpose is control, can hardly honour the human beings subjected to it. Part of the illusion of domination is to create physical differences between master and slave. Therefore I propose that everyone has the same working conditions and there are no visible differentiations at any level within the organisation. I experienced losing my office and working in an open plan cubicle. It was difficult but my cooperative interaction with those around me increased dramatically. Improved relationships made for a happier workplace. I would also like to see the abandonment of all titles that signify positional authority, such as manager or supervisor. This language re-enforces the domination of those in power and constrains the flow of conversation. The official ideology is embedded in the convention of these titles. Pay differentials could be maintained, for those are invisible to all. There would no longer be any visible signs of privilege; no private offices, no reserved car park spaces, no business lunches or networking trips reserved for the few.

This may seem pie in the sky, but lately in my own work situation I have ceased to use the title of manager. I do not have staff, they are co-workers. I use my skills and expertise to assist those people I work with. Shortly I will be moving out of my cubicle into a multi-shared workspace, exactly the same as for those people I work with. I treat others as adults not children. Although I am in a bureaucratic hierarchy, through my own local interactions with my co-workers I have created my own reality, my own
description of the business world. My perception is that those around me share this reality with me and that we have created it together through our language. The beauty of language is that management can’t control it and are more likely to be unaware of what is going on, as they pay little if any attention to cooperative interactions and language. There are pay differentials between my work colleagues, but they are invisible and largely accepted where you can help due to your skills and experience.

I take my interaction with those around me seriously and privilege informal communication. In conversation I seek to enable other participants and identify constraining factors. So there is little formality in my relationships. This has improved by cooperative interaction with others. That those above me have kept their offices, their car park spaces, their company car and their business trips has become inconsequential, as I have granted myself some freedom. I am being careful not to speak for my work colleagues. Whilst we may share some realities, each have their own. I can only speak of my experiences with them, and I believe our relationships have improved and that the time spent at work together has become more enjoyable. My belief is that we are a happier group of people having liberated ourselves from some of the illusionary symbols of power enslaving us.

In the final analysis the organisation could be a better place to be if we understood that people are human beings and not manageable resources. We are a life force with all the messiness that entails. Relationship makes us what we are, language creates our realities in interaction with each other. Management is not the cause of change, language is.

Can we ever be completely free of power and its exercise by others? I don’t believe so. If someone does not like you, and they have power over you, there is little in my experience you can do. You can play games, play different roles, ‘suck-up’, and the other party may make the right noises in response, but will they actually start to like you, or the you they create? All we can do is take our own interactions through language more seriously. Treat people as people not resources, not a means to an end. For those without power; don’t fixate on being marginalized, just ensure you are not marginalizing others.

People will continue to perpetrate harm on other people while retaining anonymity behind the cloak of invisibility which is the organisation. Such convention seems acceptable to society as long as no laws are broken. That some rulers/leaders/masters together behave unethically is undeniable as they seek to explain their actions by reference to shareholders and shareholder value. Maybe one day these people will be exposed as enemies of society and humanity in general. As they knowingly pollute and poison the world we live in, we continue to support and consume their products. We look to rulers for protection against other rulers, a form of protection against the protectors. If we so passively adopt the language of the slave we remain enslaved forever. By honouring relationship and language, together we can start to make a difference. Liberation through consciousness.

Your main value is as a human being who privileges relationship with other human beings, and through language aspires to grant and obtain maximal happiness with those with whom you interact. Be we live in a society that values money, titles and other artificial constructs, false idols if you will. The value of being a good ethical human
being is submerged beneath a self-serving ideology that places human happiness second to profitability. The wealthy in society are rewarded ensuring we forever remain focused on the ruler, the master. That is who we want to emulate, to be like. So what chance the slave; the loser? Rulers are after all winners.

In the fantasy world of business what chance the king, queens, prince and princesses will abdicate from their positions of power and privilege? Would you? And therein lies the problem. Perhaps the type of change I am proposing will only ever be suggested or brought to consciousness by the non-ruling class. These liberating ideals may themselves become intransigent ideologies if enacted, and give birth to a new form of ruler. Can we ever truly escape the slave/master dialectic? I don’t believe we have socially evolved sufficiently to grant each other such freedom and emancipation.
Hi Mark,

And so I have dropped anchor for the final time in the calm waters of understanding.

On my voyage some of the dark corners of this absurd business world I inhabit have been illuminated.

I have come to understand that the master is the ideologies to which we all succumb. Be it social or cultural there is little space for the unconventional; we are all slaves to ideal ologies.

My perspective, for now, is pragmatic. I refuse to be bound by conventionality or to be categorised or to play out well observed roles. I will be however I feel is ethically right for me, giving those around me a ‘fair go’ without causing harm to others. I will take my interaction with people more seriously, in particular my language which I now privilege as the creator of relationship. I believe it is the quality of our relationships that transforms how we experience the reality we create together.

What roles I may be observed playing I leave up to others to describe; I will not be beholden to any ideal. I will privilege my local interactions as I experience them.

It is in raising consciousness, through language, of the ideologies (ideal ologies) that dominate us that we take the first small steps towards liberation.

There is nothing as important, in an ‘organisational’ context, as people. People are social beings, we need relationship to survive. In this current age we are taken up with commodities, wealth accumulation, being better than the rest. This leads to privileging of the individual and diminishing the value of humaneness.

I wish to bring to bright consciousness with those I interact, a different perspective, an ethical perspective. I wish to illuminate, to question, to provoke the many underlying assumptions of management theory and through dialogue, through language and through redescription create non-conventional local interactions which seek to expose the official ideologies of the day. Once exposed we can then discuss together a better way to be.

Over and out,

Alan.
Hi Alan

Jacques Ellul says that we can profit from small cracks of freedom (I will email the reference etc later). I guess he means small crack of freedom within the master language games of ideologies. I think that Cupitt is on the ball when he says that the latest idioms are important. Perhaps some of the latest idioms point to, or indeed are, the small cracks of freedom. Perhaps our journeys of language which we call research theses are expeditions launched by these idioms?

My question to you as you lay at anchor is that are you prepared to weigh anchor when the winds and tides are appropriate to sail once more "till time and tide are done"? Tennyson’s poem Ulysses might be appropriate here. If you are willing, what areas of research, what idioms do you now intuit that you would like to explore?

Regards, Mark

As indicated in my e-mail of 7th March 2006, I have finished with electronic communications. However I did discuss Mark’s e-mail with him at our colloquium on 10th March 2006. Mark added that traditionally in a PhD, one points to further research that may be undertaken. My response was as follows:

What is important about this thesis is that it privileges the voice of someone you would not normally hear from, the ordinary working person. Those of us that experience the business world on a daily basis know how things really are. More people need to write about their local interactions within an appropriate research framework. I found autoethnography with a sprinkle of autobiography provided the necessary academic legitimacy required, granting me the freedom of expression I craved in this study.

My research has enabled me to make sense of my work experience. Only I can add to it or move on and research something else (at this point in time the last thing on my mind). If what I have said in this thesis makes sense to you, and you are persuaded by it, then perhaps you can now legitimately tell your story and make sense of your own experience.

Collectively our voices, our stories, can bring to bright consciousness how things really are and how things really happen in our work-life.

Each of us has a unique contribution to make to a deeper understanding of the business world – our own lived experiences.
4 WHY DOES THIS THESIS MATTER?

“Literature in many of its branches is no other than the shadow of good talk; but the imitation falls far short of the original in life, freedom and effect. There are always two to a talk, giving and taking, comparing experience and according conclusions. Talk is fluid, tentative, continually ‘in further search and progress’; while written words remain fixed, become idols even to the writer, found wooden dogmatisms, and preserve flies of obvious error in the amber of the truth.” (Stevenson, 1918. Ch. 10)

Maybe some day we can sit down together, have a coffee and discuss what matters. Until then…

4.1 CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMPLEX RESPONSIVE PROCESSES OF RELATING

I have stated that the main contribution of this thesis may be in my own interaction with others and the transformation of my own and their identities. This study privileges conversation and cooperative interaction (relationship) as the transformative influences of change. This adds to the work of Professor Ralph Stacey (Stacey, 2000, 2001, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c, 2004; Stacey & Griffin, 2005; 2002) and specifically his theory of complex responsive processes of relating which privileges conversation in local interactions in the living present. It is through conversation and social interaction that new meaning is created.

Very importantly this thesis describes the lived experiences of the author and at the same time the thesis is the lived experience of the author, illustrating without shame the inherent emotions and messiness of being human. The e-mails symbolise the continual interactions between the author and others. From these relationships new meaning emerges, which then transforms the direction and emphasis of the thesis. The thesis can therefore appear disjointed and unstructured. No attempt has been made to sanitise the content. Models that were being developed, questions that were being asked can suddenly be dropped as new meaning and understanding presents through human relating. This is how it really happened to me. Insights gained through conversation with others in local interactions transformed meaning and resulted in changes in thought and direction. Such insights are highlighted throughout the thesis as and when they occurred and are afforded the title of heuristic insights (Moustakas, 1990). Of course there were many meetings where nothing resulted. Hence the preponderance of e-mails which some may believe to be redundant. However their inclusion is necessary to demonstrate the self-organising aspect of meaning creation. Relating through conversation is a process not a system. You can’t stand outside of it and control it, you can’t make demands of it; you are part of it.

The discomfort the reader may feel with the changes in direction and lack of follow through with some concepts and ideas, further demonstrates the self-organising nature of human interaction through conversation. You don’t know where it is going to end up and what direction it is going to take you. Through the process of relating, individual
and collective identities are continuously being formed and transformed. This makes the thesis what it is – the lived experience of the author whose identity transforms as a consequence of the process of conversations and relationships with others.

The form of the thesis itself is therefore a significant contribution to the work of Stacey and complements the work of Stacey’s colleagues (Fonseca, 2002; D. Griffin, 2002; Shaw, 2002; Streatfield, 2001).

Philosophical enquiry and discussion provided the means by which to add to the work of Stacey and thereby the significance of the work. In section 2.2.4.2.2 I discuss the work of several prominent philosophers to gain insight into their views on the importance of dialogue and how language changes people (M. Bakhtin, 1984; Habermas, 1990, 1993; Jung, 1998; Morrow, 1998; Shotter & Billig, 1998; Skirbekk & Gilje, 2001; Vygotsky, 1987; Warnke, 1987). Their views challenged Stacey’s concept of free flowing conversation and led me to a pragmatic view that to have effective dialogue there had to be a conducive environment and some common understandings amongst participants.

In contributing to the work of Stacey the research and self-reflexion of the author also supports the work of George Mead (1972) and Norbert Ellias (1991). Mead saw the creation of meaning as a social process of gesture and response primarily through the significant symbol of speech. The privileging of conversation as the transformative cause of meaning is demonstrated in the thesis by the change in identity of the author occasioned by conversations with colleagues, authors and others. The person that started the thesis has changed during the thesis process. Insights were gained, understanding took place, new meaning was created and actions resulted (see section 3.3 on vignettes). Ellias (1991) discussed power relations and how people can both constrain and enable the conversation. Again the lived experience of the author confirmed this assertion and put the emphasis on taking more seriously interactions with others and enabling or constraining the communicative contributions of others.

The importance of cooperative interaction is highlighted in the thesis. Without relationship we would not survive on this planet. This is demonstrated by the section on evolution (section 1.2) with the emphasis on cooperation between all living organisms (Axelrod, 1990, 1997; Lovelock, 1987, 1990; Margulis & Dolan, 2002; Nicholson, 2000). Cooperative interaction is a key to the creation of meaning and is fostered by trust and informality. (Axelrod, 1990, 1997; Lovelock, 1987, 1990; Margulis & Dolan, 2002; Nicholson, 2000)
4.2 CONTRIBUTION TO RESEARCH IN GENERAL

This thesis can be highly significant for the learning of other researchers searching for alternative forms of representation and understandings to those offered by traditional paradigms. In particular section 3.1 which integrated into the thesis the transformation in questioning during the research programme. This demonstrates the evolution of the research question and queries the convention of completing research to answer a question. In practice the research lead to the question.

The use of e-mail correspondence throughout the thesis permits the reader to access the real life interactions of the author and others and illuminates the subject matter. It also provides a chronological journal of interaction for the author, forming an integral part of the process.

4.3 CONTRIBUTION TO AUTOETHNOGRAPHY IN PARTICULAR

Through the form and content of this thesis I wish to add to our understanding of the autoethnographic research method and with due respect to such autoethnographic champions as Ellis and Bochner and Richardson (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Richardson, 2000a, 2000b) suggest a way forward for the evolution of autoethnography within the business world.

Autoethnography is covered in this thesis in sections 2.2.5.2 and 2.8.1.7. It has been one of the more contentious aspects of this thesis due to the difficulties associated with the application to the research methodology of academic rigour and validity, in particular the absence of triangulation of results or unsupported assertions. Richardson (2000a; Richardson, 2000b) offers a test of validity as does Ellis and Bochner (2000). Without their ground breaking work it is doubtful whether this research methodology would have gained currency in the academic world. It is to the credit of Edith Cowan University that they support this study. This includes the Ethics Committee who after discussions and interaction with me lasting some three months were open minded enough not only to sanction myself as the researcher and researched but also to permit their correspondence to form part of the thesis, something never before granted. One of the contributions of this thesis, I hope, is to open the door for other like minded research students in the university.

Where I believe this study breaks new ground is in the application of autoethnography to the business world. From my research on autoethnographic studies they tend to be the preserve of people that have some form of life changing or life threatening event. They share their feelings and experience with others and in so doing contribute to our understanding of the event so described. Much of this writing is moving and fulfils the validity tests covered in the thesis (section 2.8.1.7). Usually the focus is on a single event or single case. The experience of the author relates directly to this event. However when discussing the broader issue of my life in the business world, there is no one single event to point to. The lived experience is much wider and less focused. So the question must be asked why should anyone listen to what I have to say?
The answer is that I legitimate my contribution via an autobiography (albeit focussed on education and work, section 2.8.1.5). This bears testament to my lived experiences and provides the foundation for the expression of my thoughts. Of course the learning occasioned by the process of doing a PhD is part of the lived experiences. So the lived experience forms and is formed by the learning through interaction with others. This leads me to my contribution to the autoethnographic research methodology. With a study such as this one, with no one single significant event, an autobiography is a necessity to give some degree of comfort to the reader that the study has validity. Therefore I have called such a study an autoethnobiographic study. From the Oxford English Dictionary auto is one’s own self; ethno is combined in words relating to the study of peoples and biography is the history of the lives of individuals. So it is a study of the life experience of the self in interaction with others.

Stacey (2005) states that the research must resonate, make sense to and persuade the reader. Richardson (2000b) suggests the reader must be emotionally or intellectually affected. Ellis and Bochner (2000) seek an evocative narrative. When you are relating a life changing or life threatening event, such as climbing Mount Everest, the possibility of arousing emotions in the reader and being evocative is heightened. It is not as easy when you are describing work experiences which of themselves may not be life changing, life threatening or eventful. There remains a degree of subjectivity in legitimising the autoethnographic research method. Much depends on the response of the readers over which you have little control. The more you can do to engage the reader and tell a story which makes sense to them and with which they can empathise, the more likely your thesis will gain acceptance. This thesis lays bare the quest of the author to discover a more ethical way for us to do business together, taking the reader from evolutionary theory to postmodernism. The form of the thesis itself seeks to engage the reader in a voyage of discovery. The reader needs to know that the person taking them on this voyage is well credentialed to do so. Hence the inclusion of the autobiography.

4.4 CONTRIBUTION TO MANAGEMENT

Firstly a clarification. Most senior executives are well intentioned and inherently ethical people who do their best for themselves, their staff and the community under difficult and trying circumstances. They do not abuse their power and they treat people with respect and dignity.

My problem is that I rarely meet them.

This thesis has sought to expose the underbelly of management theory, primarily through teleology (Kant, 1974). Conventional management theory privileges the individual and the systems view of organisations (Stacey, 2003b). Management can step outside of this system and design it to achieve desired outcomes. Only management exercise freedom of choice (formative and rationalist teleologies, see section 2.2.4.1.2.2). Stacey (2002) however sets out transformative teleology which privileges conversation, which is self-organising and cannot be controlled, as that which causes organisations to be the way they are.
Conversation as the transformative cause of change is a theme expanded upon whilst examining the contribution from philosophers (section 2.2.4.2.2). The free flow of conversation is questioned and preconditions for effective dialogue are discussed. Of even greater importance is the language used in conversation as it creates the shared meaning and new knowledge during the conversational process (Rorty, 1989). If management want to create new meaning and knowledge then they must understand that:

- Meaning/knowledge creation is a process not a system;
- Conversation is the self-organising process that honours the social and the informal and creates new meaning and knowledge;
- You cannot stand outside of a such a process – you are a part of it;
- You can take your language seriously and privilege your local interaction with others around you;
- All participants must establish some preconditions for effective dialogue, such as ensuring each has a ‘fair go’; and
- Conversational opportunities can be created.

This is a summary of section 3.6 which discusses what an organisation could be, and is the main contribution to management thinking made by this thesis. It is not a prescription for action but a cry for recognition of those voices marginalised by convention.

4.5 CONTRIBUTION TO ME

I no longer seek to categorise myself as being one type of manager or another. This grants me great freedom to act according to the context. It removes the anxiety of conforming to an ideal. This includes conformance with conventions such as job titles, writing styles etc. I feel free to use them, or not, depending on the context.

I am beginning to understand the ubiquitous nature of ideologies and how as Rousseau stated, “Man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains” (Rousseau, 1966 p. 3). It is impossible to be free of ideologies. You must surface them, discuss them and bring them into everyday conversation. This is the value to me of philosophy.

This thesis has given me a wonderful appreciation of philosophy and opened up many spaces in my thinking. I, and others I work with, take great joy in discussing and arguing many topics. Philosophy, in particular ethics, is a lubricant for vibrant conversation.

I strongly believe in the power of cooperation and the value of relationships. We are social beings and we need to engage in more enlightened conversations to increase our vocabularies and change the way we talk and therefore think. Through my focus on language and relationship I will be trying in my local interactions to make the business world a better place to be.
4.6 THE FINAL WORD

Blackburn points out in discussing Plato’s adoption of the dialogue form that:

“philosophy…is about discussing things in dialogue and argument
(‘dialectically’); anything read later could at best be a reminder of the
understanding achieved in this process”. (Blackburn, 2006 p. 6)

This statement rings true for this thesis. The assertions within are merely a reminder of
the understanding gained in a lifetime of experience reflected upon in a reflexive
manner through the vehicle of a thesis. The significance is in the process. The thesis
recounts the process and is itself part of the process. It is forming and being formed by
the experience of the author at the same time.

I get excited through understanding and raising to consciousness that which we accept
by convention. I question the status quo to ensure I don’t become part of it. That is
what I want this thesis to do. The contribution is for the written words to generate
conversation; to open new spaces in your thinking and to encourage dialogue between
people.
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