A REFLEXIVE STUDY OF THE CONTINUOUS PRACTICE IMPROVEMENT OF A GLOBAL PROFESSIONAL

MICHAEL M DENT

THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA
KUALA LUMPUR

2016

UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the career of a global professional as he moves across three continents whilst working for a large multi-national organisation. It describes the circle of Academe to Corporate and back to Academe. It builds the narrative from that of a student, to a practitioner, on to a learner and finally to that of a reflexive practitioner.

The target audience for this thesis is both Academics and Practitioners. The single case study approach permits observations that can be utilised as building blocks in a theory of organisations and the individuals that work within them. This complex interaction of large numbers of variables produces chaos in some dimensions (in the sense that they are both un-forecastable and uncontrollable), undesirable consequences (through some deterministic interactions) and some predictors of success or failure at an individual level. This case study thesis is therefore applying a Grounded Theory methodology. Grounded Theory requires an in depth analysis of empirical material, it is not dependent on the ability to prove or disprove hypotheses.

Marx tended to look on organisations and their managers as all with similar objectives and approaches. Critical analysis rejects this perspective and this thesis attempts to show how individual conflicts of interest can lead to undesirable consequences at organisational and societal levels. This has implications for a wide slew of legitimate State interests, including corporate taxation, legal Structure, Society etc.

The thesis utilises an Action Research methodology employing a hermeneutic and interpretative approach. The stance taken is that of Critical Theory, that is to say with an objective ontology and subjective epistemology. It therefore rejects the Post-Modernism position of subjective ontologies and epistemologies whilst accepting that language is in itself value laden and requires careful interpretation. It is, however,

written in a Post-Modernist style. In a sense it is an emic ethnographic investigation into the field (or society) of Marketing. It does, necessarily, possess autobiographical elements in order to apply the action research methodology but it is not in itself an autobiographical study. The strength of the action research approach is that a wide range of data is presented and is then subjected to evaluation and an ever decreasing spiral of supportive data based on warranted assertions is then provided in order to produce fresh insights into the field of the researcher with his living-theory

Epistemology is a central theme within this thesis and the importance of warranted knowledge as an underwriter of validity and reliability is discussed. Similarly the link between tacit knowledge and luck is examined and found to be strongly connected.

 The danger of reflexive research is that there must necessarily exist a correlation between the subject of study and the psychology of the researcher, therefore, without knowledge of both, fuller understanding remains unobtainable, without these insight is impossible.

Fundamentally the process of action, critical self-reflection and writing empowers the writer as a thinker and hence improving his capability of excellence in analysis and thus superior action in the future. The results produce insights both for future international professionals and also researchers and teachers in the field of business administration.

ABSTRAK

Tesis ini membentangkan kajian berkenaan kerjaya seorang profesional global yang mempunyai pengalaman berkerja di tiga benua semasa bertugas dengan sebuah syarikat multinasional yang besar. Ia menghuraikan kisah dalam satu bulatan yang bermula dari bidang Akademia kepada bidang Korporat dan balik kepada bidang Akademia. Ia membangunkan sebuah naratif yang bermula dari seorang pelajar kepada seorang pengamal dan balik semula kepada seorang pelajar dan akhirnya kepada seorang pengamal yang refleksif.

Golongan pembaca yang ditujukan oleh tesis ini ialah dari dunia Akademik dan juga Pengamal. Pendekatan yang menggunakan satu kajian kes membenarkan pemerhatian dilakukan, yang menjadi asas kepada teori organisasi dan individu yang berkerja di dalamnya. Interaksi yang kompleks yang melibatkan angkubah yang banyak melahirkan suasana tidak menentu dalam beberapa dimensi tertentu (dalam erti kata kedua-duanya tidak dapat di ramalkan dan dikawal), hasil yang tidak dikehendaki (melalui beberapa interkasi yang deterministik) dan beberapa ramalan kejayaan dan kegagalan pada tahap individu. Oleh itu kajian kes ini menggunakan pendekatan `Teori yang dibumikan' (Grounded Theory). Pendekatan` Teori yang dibumikan' memerlukan analisa yang mendalam terhadap bahan yang empirikal, dan tidak bergantung kepada kemampuan untuk membuktikan sama ada sesuatu hipotesis itu benar atau tidak.

Marx cenderung untuk melihat kepada sesebuah organisasi dan pengurus mereka sebagai mempunyai pendekatan dan matlamat yang sama. Analisa kritikal menolak perspektif ini dan oleh itu tesis ini berusaha untuk menunjukkan bagaimana pertelingkahan kepetingan individu boleh menghasilkan suasana yang tidak diingini pada tahap organisasi dan masyarakat. Perkara ini mempunyai implikasi yang meluas

terhadap kepentingan di pihak negara yang sah termasuk percukaian korporat, struktur perundangan, masyarakat dan lain-lain.

Tesis ini menggunkan metodologi Penyelidikan Tindakan (Action Research) berasaskan pendekatan hermeneutik dan interpretatif. Pendirian yang diambil ialah Teori Kritikal, yang bererti ianya ianya berdasarkan ontologi yang objektif dan epistemologi subjektif. Yakni ianya menolak posisi Pasca-Modernisma berdasarkan ontologi subjektif dan epistemologi yang subjektif tetapi menerima hakikat bahawa bahasa adalah secara sendirinya mempunyai nilai dan memerlukan pentafsiran yang teliti. Namun ianya ditulis dalam cara Pasca-Modernist. Dalam ertikata yang lain ianya adalah satu penyelidikan ethnografi ke dalam bidang (atau masyarakat) Pemasaran. Ia mempunyai elemen autobiografi supaya dapat menggunakan metodologi penyelidikan tindakan (action research) tetapi adalah tidak secara sendirinya satu kajian autobiografi. Kekuatan pendekatan penyelidikan tindakan ialah data yang banyak dibentangkan dan kemudiannya dinilai, dan seterusnya proses pengurangan data sokongan berdasarkan penekanan yang diperlukan untuk menghasilkan pandangan baru dalam bidang penyelidik.

Tema utama dalam tesis ini serta kepentingan ilmu yang perlu sebagai asas kepada isu kesahan dan kesahihan dibincangkan. Sehubungan itu kaitan antara ilmu yang `tacit' dan nasib dikaji dan didapati mempunyai kekuatan yang tinggi, malah lebih tinggi dari apa yang diiktiraf selama ini.

Bahaya penyelidikan refleksif ialah perlunya kewujudan korelasi antara subjek yang dikaji dan psikologi penyelidik. Oleh itu tanpa kefahaman tentang kedua-duanya, kefahaman yang mantap tidak akan dapat dicapai. Tanpanya kefahaman yang jiu adalah mustahil.Secara asasnya, proses tindakan, cermin-diri yang kritikal dan penulisan memberi kekuatan kepada penulis sebagai seorang pemikir dan oleh itu dapat

menyumbang kepada proses penambahkan kemampuan nya ke tahap cemerlang dalam aspek analisa dan oleh itu juga tindakannya pada masa hadapan. Hasilnya ialah kefahaman baru untuk golongan profesional antarabangsa dan juga para penyelidik dan guru dalam bidang pentadbiran perniagaan.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe thanks to many. I am particularly skilled at appropriating the ideas of others and if they seem of value I rapidly adopt them into my own Economist's toolbox.[1] Hence my list of acknowledgements is long, yet I fear that it but covers the surface of those who I owe gratitude to. For those who I have omitted I pray forgiveness, but I can promise that I truly do appreciate your contribution, advice, example or admonishment.

Firstly my Supervisors at Universiti (sic)[2] Malaya; Associate Professor Dr. Edward Wong Sek Khin & Professor Dr. Mohd. Nazari bin Ismail who have been supportive, constructive in their criticism and have invested much time in helping me improve my endeavours.

HELP University in the shape of my previous line manager Stephen Wu and Dr. Paul Chan, the Vice Chancellor, who have both encouraged and supported my studies.

My many line managers, all of whom taught me something – even the ones that I did not work well with. One in particular stands out – Peter Davies, from whom I learned a lot, it just took me a long time to realise it, partly as a result of my reflections in this thesis.

As my career progressed I have also found myself learning more from my colleagues, and I would particularly like to mention two mentors and life coaches at DHL – Tim Roberts and Chris Wright. They both helped me enormously in many ways as they battled through problems and issues that I also subsequently had to deal with.

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[1] As Professor John McGee, one of my Economics lecturers at London Business School once termed it.

[2] In Malaysia public universities are spelt in Malay as "Universiti". Those in the private sector (such as HELP) are spelt as in English, e.g. HELP University.

Strangely enough all three of us held the same job rôle at different times despite coming from very different professional backgrounds.   They both died early and far too young.

I also increasingly found myself learning more from my direct reports and more recently my Students. Too many to mention of course, but important nonetheless and as time has progressed, increasingly international in nature. (e.g. China, East Timor, Mongolia, Pakistan, Nepal, Kurdistan, South Sudan & Vietnam).

I would categorise these, using the nomenclature of Kay Distel (2013) as Critical Friends, holding up a mirror crafted by Jo and Harry and hence enabling me to glimpse slightly more of my worldview than would elsewise be possible.

My Father and Mother who apart from teaching me the value of education also inculcated a system of moral values for which I am eternally grateful and hope I have passed on to some extent to my children, Samantha and Gordon, perchance also my grandchildren; Oliver and Evelyn.   My Mother (Hilda) and my Sister Fiona have both been a constant source of inspiration and encouragement in my endeavours. My Uncle Howard Dent (in conjunction with my Father) gave me my love of trains, transport, economics and travel.

Fortune has also smiled on me with regard to proof reading, my wife, Tray, as a teacher of English, has found and corrected a legion of, what would otherwise have been unnoticed grammar and punctuation errors.   It would also be remiss of me to omit my ex-wife Fiona, she taught me a lot about subjectivity, feelings and leadership (on which she has published widely).   After thirty years of marriage it is inevitable that some of her wisdom would eventually seep in.

I have had a variety of gurus over the past years, squash and chess coaches, karate senseis, language teachers (German, Dutch, Spanish and Malay) and dive & flying

Instructors.   They have all taught me a wee bit about life, its problems and their solutions – and indeed philosophy.

If I have one regret I fear that it is an important one. I failed to recruit a mentor to assist me later in my career.   I have included a section on serendipity (or luck) in this thesis, and sad to report – this mistake was mine, and mine alone. The untimely death of Professor Michael Beesley[3] was a heavy personal blow to me, he was my true mentor up until that time.

Needless to say, despite my appropriations of the ideas of others, the mistakes and errors contained within this thesis (and indeed omissions) are all my (existential) responsibility.

I read a great book a short while ago. The author prefaced his work with the words: "Made in Kilmarnock".   I would very much like to do the same, but as I only lived in Edinburgh for little more than two years after I was born and have been moving ever since a more accurate apposition for myself might be, perhaps:

Global Product

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[3] Professor Michael Beesley, who …. died aged 75, was among the most gifted industrial economists of his time. He was among the first to recommend road-pricing and his views were influential on the privatisation of British Telecom and British Rail and on bus deregulation. His output was prodigious and his interest in students, especially research students, was legendary. Christopher Foster, theguardian.com, Friday 8 October 1999.

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List of Abbreviations and Definitions

AA	The Automobile Association. In the early 1970s and 1980s this was a non-profit making motorists' members club with its Headquarters in Basingstoke, UK
ABC	Activity Based Costing. DHL was particularly proficient in this area and used the analysis in preparing Customer quotations and RFQs.
ABX	Airborne Express. A US based Airline and Express Carrier. Bought out by DHL in 2002
B2B	Business to Business, sometimes referred to as Industrial Marketing
B2C	Business to Consumer, sometimes referred to as Consumer Marketing
BDP	Best Demonstrated Practice
CEO	Chief Operating Officer
Cf.	Latin abbreviation for Confer. Literally compare with.
CIM	Chartered Institute of Marketing, a professional body for Marketeers based in Cookham, Berkshire, UK
COBOL	Common Orientated Business Language. A programming language primarily used on large mainframe computers in a batch processing environment in the 1970s and 1980s. Still in use to some limited extent in 2015.
COO	Chief Operating Officer. In DHL a COO was responsible for a region of the World, e.g. International Americas, the USA, Europe & Africa, Middle East and Asia Pacific. The COOs report to the CEO.
CPD	Continuous Professional Development. Also an annual self-improvement programme run by the Chartered Institute of Marketing which enables the participant to use the designatory title of "Chartered Marketer".
C&L	Coopers and Lybrand Associates Limited, the consultancy arm of Coopers & Lybrand (in the UK) which subsequently has become Price Waterhouse Coopers.
DHL	Freight, Logistics, Express and Mail carrier owned by DWPN. The initials stand for the names of the three US founders; Dalsey, Hilblom & Lynn.
DHQ	Domestic Head Quarters. Euphemism for working at home in DHL Express (cf. WHQ) based on the internal usage of IATA or quasi IATA airport codes to denominate international locations.
Dissertation	I use the term 'Thesis' for higher degrees by research only, and

	'Dissertation' for higher degrees by coursework, including a research project.
DWPN	Deutsche Post World Net. The German post office. Logistics activities all based under the DHL banner.
FEDEX	Federal Express. US based Airline, Logistics and Freight company.
FMCG	Fast Moving Consumer Goods, a sub-set of Consumer Marketing
GCC	Global Coordination Centre. The DHL Global head office in the early 2000s.
Gestalt	German word meaning the overall or 'big' picture.
Halal	An object or action which is permissible under Islam
Haram	Sinful and hence not permitted under Islamic Jurisprudence
HR	Human Resources a.k.a. Personnel
HRD	Human Resource Development, a company programme designed to bring Managers up to date with the latest HR theories.
IATA	The International Air Transport Association is the trade association for the world's airlines.
IRS	United States Internal Revenue Service
JIT	Just in Time, a key concept in logistics management which helps minimise inventory costs and increases efficiency particularly in a large scale production line manufacturing environment.
Kaizen	Japanese word meaning "Continuous Improvement"
MBO	Management by Objectives. Popularised by Peter Drucker.
MD	Managing Director
OGSMt	Acronym for the strategic planning process, Objective (singular and stated in one sentence), Goals (in numbers), Strategies, Measures (quantifiable) and finally (with a lower case "t") tactics.
Pax	Travel industry jargon for Passengers. Used within this thesis to mean people, staff, colleagues etc.
q.v.	Quod Vide (Latin). See elsewhere within this work (thesis).

RFQ	Request for Quotation. Similar to the idea of a tender for a particular project or piece of work. The total document (in DHL) would typically be of 8 to 12 pages but could be far larger for more complex projects. Details could include; key personnel, routings, quality standards expected and costings.
RoMI	Return on Marketing Investment. A cross industry "club" formed by Cranfield University to investigate best industry marketing practice.
s/he	Abbreviation for 'She' or 'He'. The second person singular without reference to gender.
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely. Acronym relating to the characteristics of a robust plan.
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures.
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.
Takaful	An Islamic concept based on co-operative insurance.
Thesis	I use the term 'Thesis' for higher degrees by research only, and 'Dissertation' for higher degrees by coursework, including a research project.
TINA	There Is No Alternative. A phrase popularised by Margaret Thatcher (former British Prime Minister 1979-1990) to describe the choice of strategy selected having no other feasible option.
TM	Transcendental Meditation.
TNT	Thomas Nationwide Transport. Australian founded freight and Logistics company partially owned by the Dutch Post office. Subject of an unsuccessful takeover bid by UPS in 2012.
TQM	Total Quality Management. A concept associated with W. Edwards Deming who introduced the philosophy into Japan immediately after World War II.
Updent	A qualitative improvement in a system or process (author generated)
UPS	United Parcel Service. A US based Airline, Freight and Logistics company.
WHQ	World Wide Headquarters, DHL Express, Brussels pre 1998
WWII	World War 2

SYNOPSIS

This synopsis should be read in conjunction with the thesis abstract, I have endeavoured not to overly duplicate content.   The primary purpose of this section is to link the five papers that I present and demonstrate how they combine with each other in my research programme.   The papers were written over a period of about 3 years, although the publication dates do not reflect this. My research methodology is based on a continuous spiral of reflection and hence my position and understanding changed as I continued through the research programme (see diagram on the following page).

In this synopsis I detail the methodology and an explanation of how the published papers are linked together based on the paradigm of Critical Theory and utilising an Action Research methodology with interpretative and hermeneutic foundations.   The overarching approach is known as Living Educational Theory as promulgated by Professor Jack Whitehead of the University of Bath.[4]   The specific approach I use is referred to as "The Living Thesis", the methodology that I have chosen to adopt is that of Wong (2007), which is that of a case study applying ethnographic reflection to my professional practice.

In all of the papers listed below I have been the primary author.   My Supervisors at the Universiti Malaya, Professor Nazari bin Ismail and Associate Professor Edward Wong are my co-authors.   I presented at the ALARA conference in Brisbane in September 2013 and have also had (subsequently) an article based on my paper published in their Journal.

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[4] Whitehead, J. (1989). Creating a Living Educational Theory from Questions of the kind 'How do I improve my Practice'. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 19, pp41-52.

The Diagram below provides a concise overview of the methodology employed which is based upon an understanding of the philosophical constructs of this research methodology, reflective writing, triangulation with secondary data sources and literature and finally analysed as part of a meta data matrix

A Qualitative Case Study Methodology, employing Habermas's critical social theory perspective within a phenomenonological, reflective practitioner approach.
(adapted from Lavertu (2007).
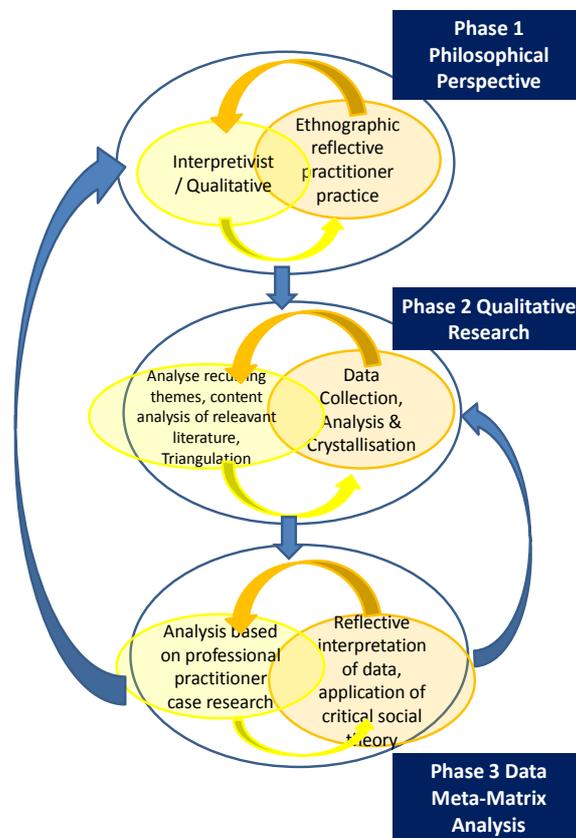
This methodology employs heuristics applying both depth and breadth of reflections on my experiential material thus producing insights into the field of international marketing. I feel that I have been consistent with brand map in which my espoused theory is mainly consistent with my lived theory (Whitehead (1993)), although I recognise that this has not always been the case. Self awareness is vital to the correct recognition and identification of the inconsistencies between espoused and lived theory

(Noffke, 1997). My writing is within what Jack Whitehead calls the "Living Theory Paradigm", he asserts that the use of the first person singular ("I") is not only acceptable, but also recommended, encapsulating as it does the subjectivity of the paradigm. Enquiries of "How do I improve what I am doing" involves the clarification and evolution in the cycle of action reflection, action plans, data and subsequent reflection on the effectiveness of the actions and then evaluation, this is then followed by the modification of the action plan and the cycle continues (Whitehead J. , 2012)

The central problem that I start with is "How do I improve my professional practice"

I see myself astride two complementary professions – that of an Academic and a Marketeer. I re-entered academia in 2009 after some 30 years in the corporate world. This was not an idle move, I had taught previously back in 1981 and it was always my intention to return.

The published articles all relate to the problem identified above, some cover the theory and epistemological foundations of my research, some the overall gestalt of my career and some cover vignettes illustrating critical moments or lessons learnt. All conclude with reflections on the implications for the theory of the philosophy of management.

The research methodology does not require the generation of new rules for behaviour or explanations of organizational behaviour, nonetheless three observations are made which may prove of value to future researchers. This is partly the role of Action Research, to provide fuzzy answers to fuzzy questions which can then generate more precise questions and research methodologies appropriate to the new problems identified.

As an output of my published papers and subsequent reflection I would put forward three observations relating to Critical Moments, the Gently phenomenon and the value of Tacit Knowledge.

Critical Moments

Over time some events are quite momentous and others fairly insignificant. However, on reflection it becomes clearer that some were seminal and others merely bright shooting stars.   These are also sometimes termed critical moments of decision.   I would differentiate between critical moments, which I see as key decision nodes in one's life or career and critical events or incidents which relate to a change in one's external environment which result in a significant impact on one's planned or expected future.

The Gently Phenomenon

Various writers on organizations (Back, 1992), (Bechtold, 1997) & (Black, 2000) utilise Chaos and Complexity Theories to posit a view of multiple dynamic interactions within a company.   On reflection I now see this as even more complex still – there is also an industry dimension where the same actors come into contact with each other in different roles at different times in different organisations. I refer to this phenomenon in many of the papers. In the absence of a suitable name for this principle of interconnectedness I will refer to it as the "Gently" phenomena.

I refer to the Gently phenomena being the probability that in any one person's career that they will come back into contact with past colleagues in other organizations later in their career.   Given, geography, educational background, the job specifications, age group etc. this (in my experience) is quite common.   The way I would describe it

would be similar to that of the basic nuclear model, with the Organization represented by the centre of the atom with various professions (Marketing, Engineering, Finance, IT, HR etc) orbiting around each other.   Any individual may be closely attached to his professional discipline or area of expertise or more closely attached to the organization itself.   Nonetheless some people would leave and join other organizations - usually within the same discipline. The reason that the Gently Phenomena is important is because these individuals may know more about you than your current work colleagues (c.f. the Johari Window) which can provide either a positive or negative influence on your career.

Tacit Knowledge, Serendipity & the Science of Being Lucky

I now realise that tacit knowledge is of critical importance, far more so than qualifications or time served in a particular role.   The ability to anticipate the moves of others is the key to being in the right place at the right time. Many would describe this as luck, but I would reply that in many cases people (to a large extent) can make their own luck.

I have been described by many people as a very lucky person.   And I do agree that, for the most part, life has treated me most kindly. The important question is why have I been lucky? I posit that my modus operandi, interpersonal skills and learning from past failures have equipped me to handle complex situations and extrapolate potential solutions as a result of the meditation and reflection.   In other words experience and practice are slightly improving the probability of success.   Indeed skill and talent can often be seen to be subordinate to practice (Syed, 2010).   I attempt to illustrate these learning situations and critical moments at various points throughout the five papers.

One of the Agency planners gave me some advice early in my career – make friends before you need them. I think this has to be one of my key learning points from my own reflections.

The counterpoint to this would be the danger of a new line manager – particularly one who does not know you, has no loyalty to you and who may have conflicting objectives. In my case this has proved to my detriment on three separate occasions (once in the UK, once in Belgium and once in Malaysia). Whilst this is unsurprising the learning point is identical to the one above. Make friends before you need them. The difference is that between that of opportunities and threats. Maximising opportunities and minimising threats would be the mantra. Both require maintaining strong networks and creating favourable impressions but the latter may require more of an external rather than internal focus. After many years in not only the same industry (which was itself consolidating) but also in the same company I found that my external networks were actually quite weak. In retrospect I should have been more active with the Chartered Institute of Marketing and certainly monitored external job opportunities more closely. Networking and taking advantage of the Gently phenomenon could have proved serendipitous.

CHAPTER 1   INTRODUCTION

1.0 Prologue

This chapter is intended to provide you, the reader, with an understanding of who I am, what I am doing, how I am doing it and an indication of when and where the process started and indeed how it has continued.

I commence by defining my target audience (academics and professional practitioners) and then proceed to describe my field of research interest, effectively the improvement of my professional practice[5].   I describe the background to the theory of continuous improvement and identify my philosophical position in terms of ontology and epistemology. At this point the reader will have already become aware of my use of the first person singular which is emblematic within the living theory tradition.[6]   This field utilises action research as a methodology and I describe both the concept of living theory and the genre of action research in order to make clear the underpinnings of my methodology. In addition to use of the first person singular I also use metaphors, soft systems methodology, diagrams, photographs and quotations.   The purpose of this to provide the reader with greater context to facilitate understanding and hence achieve one of my main goals.   Additionally it fulfils one of van Maanen's principles (1988) in the pursuit of effective communication – 'to recount striking stories with interest'. Richardson (2000) would add a combination of scientific and aesthetic criteria to Van Maanen's, namely: "is the text artistically shaped, satisfying, complex and not boring? " In both respects I hope the reader is not disappointed.

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[5] Practice may be defined as the contribution a professional makes in their rôle in society. This includes all aspects of behaviour, including ethical positions and periodic critical reflection (Higgs, Horsfall, & Grace, 2009).

[6] Examples of recent theses in this tradition include:Van Tuyl (2010), Crotty (2012) & Hughes (2012).

The difficulty of measurement is as there are multiple potential methods of measuring improvement but these critically depend on what exactly one wishes to improve. I discuss possible types of measurement before proposing my preferred option.

The spiral of action research requires continuous self-examination, critical reflection and consideration of future plans and so therefore, to be successful in this enterprise I need to consider my personal competence and capability in this area. I conclude that for various reasons I do possess the necessary credentials to embark on this research.

In order to provide the reader with context I briefly describe myself in terms of age, background, socio-economic class and perspectives on life before going on to describe my research methodology. I describe my methodology as a qualitative case study employing Habermas's critical social theory perspective within a phenomenological, reflective practitioner approach. This thesis also underlines the rôle of creativity and indeed tacit knowledge, based on a thorough understanding of existing theory, empirical observation and abductive reasoning which can result in inspirational thought which results in the discovery of patterns new to existing human knowledge.

Becoming a proficient reflective and reflexive practitioner requires adopting a life-long learner approach to work, career, family, health and social interactions. All of these domains overlap and interact with one another. The language of English is also of import, as indeed is the structure of language. The thesis explores the philosophical conceptualisation of business and how it is experienced from an emic perspective. Hidden frames of reference can provide a barrier to understanding and hence this research provides a richer insight into language within the business context.

I conclude with an overview of the thesis and some deeper reflections on what further insights I am now able to identify. Indeed this cycle of reflection followed by deeper and yet deeper reflection is a characteristic of all chapters.

1.1 What am I doing?

Following the typology of Shankar (2009), there are two main potential categories of reader of this thesis. The first is fellow academics who will judge its worth by the usual academic criteria. The second is professional practitioners, possibly in Marketing or perhaps in other fields. Clearly in order to be considered successful I need to satisfy the first group. But it is to the second group that the greatest value may obtain. By my writings, I hope to effect an androgogical (i.e. pedagogical but specifically focusing on adults) communication that will too, allow others to improve their practice.[7] By detailing my experiences and what I have learned from them I can present you, gentle reader, with a picture that enables you (hopefully) to transfer insights into your own field and utilise the knowledge to create possible solutions to your own issues and problems. In this sense, my thesis[8] is an educational narrative. It is also necessarily an interpretive approach where reality is only given meaning by understanding social interactions and the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckman, 1967) or multiple realities (Twining, 2000).

A key point that I wish to make about interpretation is that it is grounded in something that we have in advance, "Vorhabe" (Heidegger, 1962), our own understanding of the context colours the picture that we are seeing. Interpretation is not something that one *does* it is something that one is directly involved *in* (Gallagher, 1992). Praxis[9] (Schwandt, 2002) is the name given to the engagement embedded in communally

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[7] The use of multi-media explications was enthusiastically proposed to me by Professor Jack Whitehead when I met him in Bath, Somerset in the summer of 2011. The video "What am I doing?" http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eaJj-GAW3gk&lr=1&user=JackWhitehead covers this point in little over a minute.

[8] I use the term 'Thesis' for higher degrees by research only, and 'Dissertation' for higher degrees by coursework, including a research project. (Dick B. , 2002, p. 169). I mention this here because I was once told by a Professor at London University that there was someone in the University who knew exactly what the difference between a Thesis and Dissertation actually was, but that he himself did not know who that person was.

[9] More fundamentally "Praxis" refers to the application of theory into practice (Lather, 1991).

shared understandings and values and depends on their everyday linguistic usage (Dunne, 1993). Hence the two categories of reader of this thesis will necessarily both receive slightly different interpretations of what I am saying because their "vohabe" and experiences are also different. This may or may not be desirable, but it is most certainly unavoidable.

The acid test for both categories of reader can be found in the standards of "Truth Claims" (Habermas J. , 1976) which, broadly, include whether the thesis is convincing, honest, original and leads to increased understanding. Lytotard (1984) suggests that the acid test is determined from the perspective of the practitioner as s/he will be able to determine whether it is good theory/research from a practical or technological point of view – or to be more specific can it guide *action?*

In order to understand any narrative some context must be given, in terms of locations, dates and political, economic, social and technological background. I do this as accurately as I can but I also assist the reader by providing as rich a contextual picture as I can. Language is important and I will also try to augment this with illustrations, metaphors and any device which I believe will assist in this endeavour, as indeed Max van Mannen (1989) would concur. This is necessary but I will endeavour to cut out the purely anecdotal by using the twin principles of reflexivity and Occam's razor.

Methodologically there is of course circularity in this. My own interpretation is based on my own praxis and therefore my vorhabe will heavily influence this. The concept of reflexivity[10] (which questions not only the process but also the objective or the question and also examines the relationship between the object and the researcher) allows some of these binds to be cut – but only some. It should go without saying that under no circumstances should I allow myself to drift into an ego-orientated quest based

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[10] The problem of reflexivity's impact on Scientific method was identified by Karl Popper (1957)

narrative. (Frank, 1995); (Thayer-Bacon, 2003).   I need to continue in a critical rather than a self-congratulatory manner (Harding S. , 1986).

1.2 Problem Statement and Research Objective

The central problem that I start with is "How do I improve my professional practice"

I see myself astride two complementary professions – that of an Academic and a Marketeer[11].   I re-entered academia in 2009 after some 30 years in the corporate world. This was not an idle move, I had taught previously back in 1981 and it was always my intention to return.   But more on this later.

The technique that I shall be applying is that of Action Research, this is the theory of how through a continuous cycle of action, assessment, reflection and subsequent amended action a process, system or organisation can be steadily improved upon (Schön D. A., 1983).   I will describe Action Research, its place in qualitative research and its' underpinning philosophical tenets in some detail later in Chapter I.   However, the specific research methodology I follow is that of the Living Theory Paradigm (Whitehead J. , 2000), (McNiff & Whitehead, 2002) and (Wong E. S., 2003) (2004). This paradigm utilises a number of different cycles of reflection and the deeper levels of reflection have been termed by Moon (2004, p. 97) as critical reflection, perspective transformation or reflexivity.

The concept of the Living Theory has been defined as:

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[11] My spelling is intentional. And the Economist Style Guide would indeed agree with me (c.f .Black Marketeer, Free Marketeer etc.). But my professional body (the CIM) is driving its' brand image strongly away from any pejorative connotations and prefers the use of the term "Marketer".

> "…an explanation produced by an individual for their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formation in which they live and work."   (Whitehead J. , 2009).

Professor Whitehead explains his threefold approach to Living Theory in a video (16th April 2014) in which he explains how people perceive their embodied values and how this has influenced how they have lived and worked.

Figure 1.1 Living Theory

Jack Whitehead (2000) also states that Action Research reports can be judged in terms of whether the author shows that s/he is offering explanations, rather than only observations and descriptions of practice by living out their declared values. From there I very much want to communicate what I have learned such that both the theory of marketing and the experiences of those working in it are enhanced as I contribute to the body of marketing knowledge. A former Professor of mine once said: "through the denial of feelings, imagination and the human spirit, concealed assumptions, rigid sterile and inappropriate methods of inquiry and the enlargement of trivia into problems of consequence, we, you and I preserve our employment prospects to the detriment of our souls, our fellow men and society" (Pym, 1993, p. 234).

This view is echoed by Leitch & Day (2000), Swan & Bailey (2004) and Bolton (2005) who believe that the rôle of emotion[12] needs to be recognised in understanding and developing one's capability in self-reflection. This concept of emotional insight (Moon J. , 2004) is similar to that of Mezirow (1981) who called it "affective reflexivity", more recently Cathryn Lloyd (2010) used the term "affective reflection".

In a sense, my study is an emic ethnographic investigation into the field (or society) of Marketing.[13] It is not, however, a conventional ethnographic study based on positivistic assumptions, but more of a critical ethnographic approach. Critical ethnography aims to not only critique but also posit better options for future action. Following Van Maanen's (1988) typology my approach is "realist" as opposed to confessional or impressionist.

Burawoy (2004) identified two types of knowledge; instrumental knowledge is concerned with solutions for either practical or theoretical problems. On the other hand reflexive knowledge is more about questioning the ends. The focus of instrumental knowledge on deriving an answer rather than querying the question is a weakness identified by Paul Feyerabend in his seminal book – Against Method (1988). Reflexive knowledge recognises that it is not value neutral so that critical evaluation once again depends on "vorhabe". Thus, the epistemology of what we call Critical Theory is essentially subjective.

In order to improve my practice I can do this by means of informational or instrumental learning by way of reflection. But if I do this within a constant frame of reference, then

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[12] See for example; Fineman (Emotion in Organizations, 1993)

[13] There are a number of extant research methodologies identified in the literature, Marxism (from which Feminism and Critical theory could be said to be derived), Structural Functionalism, Hermeneutic Inquiry, Phenomenology, Ethnography, Action Research, Post-Modernism etc. But these methodologies are not separate distinct methodologies which are mutually exclusive; they overlap in three (or four) dimensional space in much the same way as Euler's circles. I see my thesis as incorporating elements of a number of these methodologies. Furthermore I see this as a clear strength and by no means a weakness.

I have not achieved what Kegan (2000) described as Transformational Learning. In order to achieve this, I also need to re-examine my understanding of meanings – indeed my own epistemology.

There is also an element of self-care in the reflexive process as identified by Mead (1934) and Garfinkel (1967). Through reflection we can make sense of what has happened and create (or possibly recreate) a sense of order. This sense of order or control over our recollections of the past also provide an element of control (Giddens, 1991) and also potentially empowerment. Boud, Keogh & Walker (1985) also discuss the idea of "attending to feelings" but also suggest that emotions and feelings can be both positive but also barriers towards learning from the past. Hence a benefit of this thesis can be to provide clarity, order and empowerment to the author, but only if I take on board the fact that my emotional feelings and reactions may cloud learning, unless I take care to avoid this.

I will go on to describe in some detail my Objective, Goals, Strategies, Measures and tactics in a later section[14], however, I think it is important to clearly state the overall objective right at the beginning of this thesis.

To communicate how I improve my practice as a Global Professional

To achieve this, I must first understand how I can improve my practice and then endeavour to communicate it in a manner which brings insight and understanding to the reader and potentially enables future improved action for other professionals. I will elucidate in further sections upon the importance of Fluid Intelligence and Tacit Knowledge to the rôle of a professional Marketeer. Essentially these concepts relate how an individual can adjust to new problems using past experience as a guide but more

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[14] See Figures 1.10 and 1.12 in Chapter 1.

importantly their skill in adapting to a rapidly changing and turbulent environment. By empowering the individual with awareness, understanding and reflexivity, they can become far more capable and effective in their various rôles in life.

Similarly in a later section I will describe my methodology in great detail. Suffice it now to say that I am employing a Self-reflective, Action Research methodology within the Critical Realism paradigm. The reasons for this are that (as I will later explain) Life Experience is a fundamental and critical input to Fluid Intelligence (see section 2.4) and Tacit Knowledge. This being so my life experience can add to the nexus of knowledge whilst simultaneously providing the philosophy of understanding. This hermeneutic reflection warrants my actions, which has considerable import to the truth, validity and reliability of this work.

1.3 Critical Theory within the Corporate Context.

One criticism of Marketing is that far too little research is conducted in the reflexive area and the research conducted in the instrumental area is focused almost entirely on academic issues with little relevance to Marketing practitioners (Piercy, 2002).

There has been some application of action research in Marketing (Gummesson & Perry, 2004), but it has not been a rich field of enquiry. There had been no prior research in the area of marketing action research before 2003 (Kates & Robertson, 2004). One attempt to look at the work practices in one organisation and then applying the findings to another organisation did seem successful (Thompson & Perry, 2004). The interesting thing about this particular piece of work was that one paradigm (critical theory) was applied to the first organisation and a different paradigm (realism) was applied to the second. On one level this simply suggests that the same explanation may be observed by way of different lenses, however, it also gives rise to the incommensurability thesis

(Kuhn T. , 1970), which states that useful dialogue across paradigm boundaries or between two paradigms is impossible as they have no common frame of reference. I do not accept this position without serious reservations. In my view, triangulation (observation of certain phenomena through different lenses) can add corroboration and validation to assumptions that one paradigm on its own would be incapable of sustaining I do, however, agree that different paradigms applied to separate problems can make interpretation of results and potential agreement on generalisable theory, extremely difficult.

The concept of generalisable theory is the primary objective of all researchers – managerial or of any other discipline. Sadly, the applicability of much managerial research is evaluated as not much more than useless by many academics (Behrman & Levin, 1984).

More fundamentally the vast majority of Action Research relating to the continuous improvement of professional practice has been in the areas of Social Services, Education, Hospital Services and other industries which could be referred to as either Caring Professions or Vocational work (McNiff, 2010, p. 41) Indeed the early work was by Lewin himself in the field of Education and it was he who coined the term 'Action Research', but the earliest work was probably by John Dewey who advocated teachers to examine their own practice. (Dewey J. , 1929). Action Research continued to be popular within Education into the 1950s[15] but interest then gradually declined for a time.

The differentiating characteristic of this kind of research as opposed to my approach is that the "Client" group are in some way disadvantaged, weaker or in a more dependent position. Within the Marketing arena, the protagonists will also have different

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[15] See for example Stephen Corey, Action Research for improving Practice, (Corey, 1953)

perspectives, conflicting objectives etc. But all of the stakeholders (generally) are in relatively strong positions. Red Ocean strategy (Kim & Mauborgne, 1995) describes the blood in the water of a cut-throat business environment. Machiavelli describes the best course of action to deal with potential rivals (kill them quickly before they become a threat). One of my line managers (i.e. my direct superior at the time) had a copy of "The Prince" by Machiavelli amongst the few books on his bookshelf and followed his thinking very closely. I have twice been in a position where I have been feared as a potential rival and instantly suffered the consequences. This is by no means, to suggest that politics do not exist in all organisations, wherever there are people, then politics will exist, rather my point is that outwith[16] the Caring/Education sectors (where so much Action Research is conducted [17]) comparatively few of the actors are in a dependent/weak position. Consultation/involvement with rivals is clearly a complex minefield to navigate. I attach in Appendix A a description of a shadowing exercise conducted on my activities in this regard by a London Business School MBA Student (Aurichio, 2004) in the early 2000s. In this, it can be seen that networking and attention to potential threats is a key component of modern corporate practice.

I show below the four quadrants proposed by (Johnson & Duberley, 2003) which characterise the philosophical foundations of management research. These are based on Subjective and Objective Epistemologies and Subjective and Objective Ontologies. Epistemology[18] relates to the theory of knowledge and Ontology is concerned with the theory of being – or in more simplistic terms issues of the nature and reality of truth.

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[16] One of my favourite and most useful Scots words – which bears no relation to its English faux amis "without" but rather means - not included.

[17] See, for example' (Whitehead J. , 2012) for a number of examples in this field.

[18] The term epistemology was also introduced by a Scot – James Ferrier (in about 1854) who like Adam Smith was also a Professor of Moral Philosophy.

Much of objective ontology is based upon what is called the correspondence theory of truth.

This is by no means the only way of identifying the main types of theoretical frameworks available but it has the beauty of simplicity (as well as following the well-worn business academic tradition of fitting neatly into a two by two matrix).

My approach is Post-Modernist in its style of writing and I could also apply this theoretical underpinning to my Action Research as advocated by Brown and Jones (2001), albeit with some misgivings. In my view, however, the subjectivist ontology of Post Modernism runs the risk of *everything* becoming relative and hence nothing more can be usefully said. Alvesson & Sköldberg see that the mark of good research is not the method, but the ontological and epistemological quality of thought (2009, p. 8). My position is with an objective ontology but my epistemology subjective, hence placing me in the environs of Critical Theory or Critical Realism.   Taking the advice of Bob Dick (2002) I wish to be clear on both my epistemology and methodology, the diagram below should assist in this process.

	Objectivist Ontology	Subjectivist Ontology
Objectivist Epistemology	**POSITIVISM** **NEOPOSITIVISM** **(Empirical Observations and Measurement generate Explanations)**	**NULL** **(Observation of truth is impossible as it is embedded in the researcher)**
Subjectivist Epistemology	**CRITICAL THEORY** **CONVENTIONALISM** **CRITICAL REALISM** **(Socially constructed and abstract)** **PRAGMATISM** **(Purely Practical)**	**POSTMODERNISM** **(Knowledge is influenced by both the Researcher and by Language)**

Figure 1.2   Reflexivity & Management Research

The above diagram is of course, a relatively simplistic two by two grid which does not really fully describe the overlaps and similarities between the different theories.   The Null box is useful in that it shows how a Subjective Ontology and Objective Epistemology render truth unattainable.   However, it also prevents a more detailed examination of the lower half of the Boston Box.

A useful alternative to the 2 by 2 box is to view Conventionalism, Post Modernism and Critical Theory in a Venn diagram.
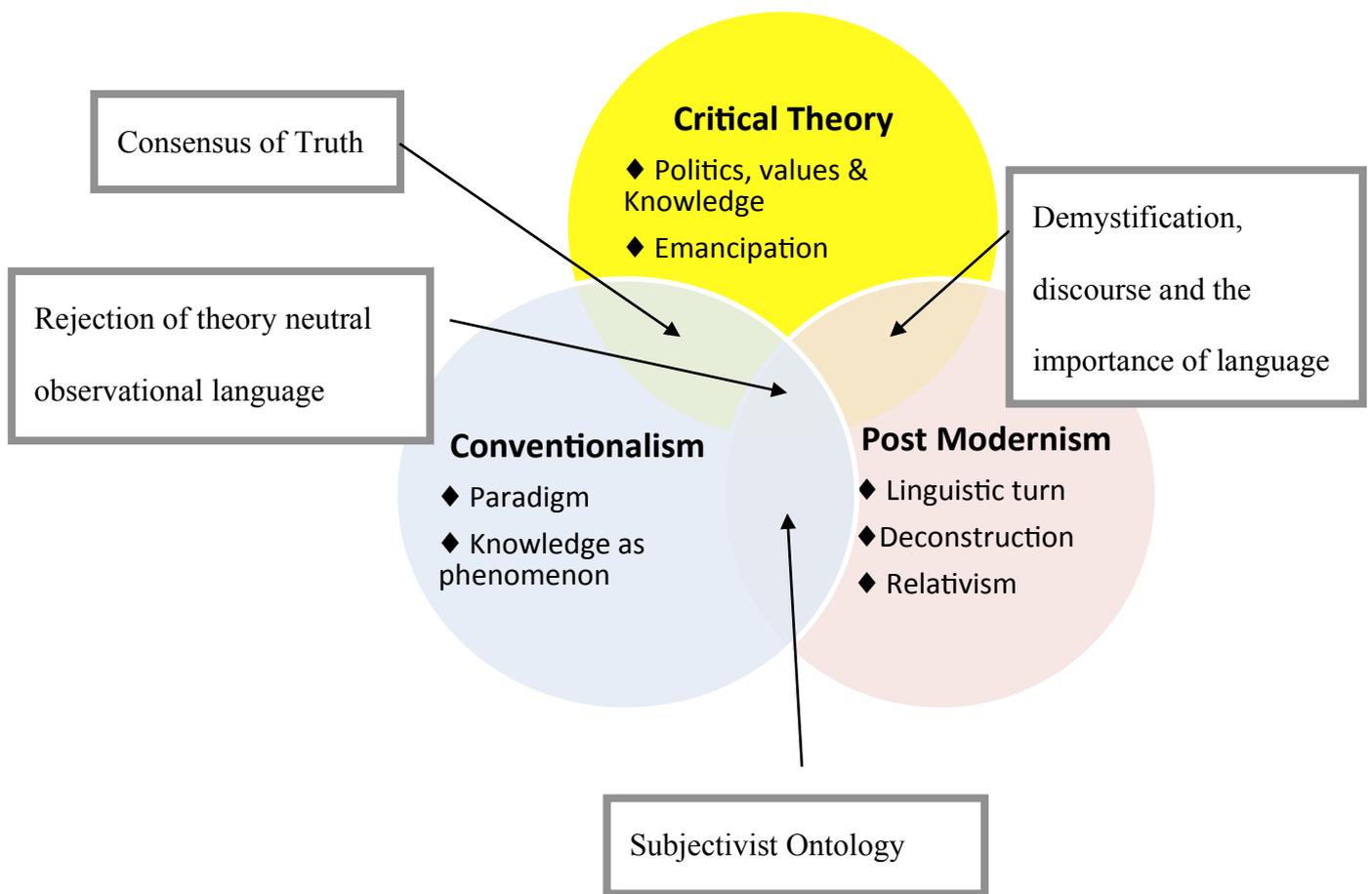
Figure 1.3   Similarities between Critical Theory, Conventionalism and Postmodernism adapted from Horkheimer (1989)

There are indeed, many overlaps between Critical Theory and Post Modernism but the main gap is the lack of a speech (language) framework within Post Modernism.   In addition Best & Kellner (1991) criticise post modernism for its emphasis on individualism and lack of acceptance of criticism.   There is one term in the above diagram which requires further explanation which is that of "Linguistic Turn" (Rorty, 1967).   I have already alluded to Wittgenstein's language games and indeed games, interpretation and nomenclature are all relevant here.   As Goodman (1978) has described colours as potentially Grue or Bleen, similarly some species are colour blind (cats for example are red/green colour blind, yet they can see far more in the dark than humans).   Some species such as butterflies and bees can possibly perceive different

shades of Ultra-Violet – which are beyond the limits of human perception.   Snakes have a form of infra-red vision enabling them to see prey in the dark and some species (such as Cuttlefish) can detect the polarisation of light, which gives them further competitive advantages.   Certain women (the gene responsible for this only exists on the Y chromosome) have four types of cones for perceiving colour (as opposed to most of the human race who only enjoy three);   they are known as tetrachromats and can identify many different hues that for the most of us are identical.   As a result, the names or labels we ascribe to certain observations – be they a table, a flower, a traffic light or a managerial conflict are limited by our own vocabulary, metaphors and experience.   I can describe in great detail how I conceive of the colour white to a member of the Innuit but their understanding may vastly exceed mine.   In Taoist philosophy there is a distinction between "ming" (the name) and "shih" (the actuality) (Fung, 1948) and this in my view captures the reality of the difference between the two.   I will explain this in greater detail in later chapters.

The idea that language either determines thought or at the least influences it is known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Skerrett, 2010).   This in a way could be interpreted as a problem for critical theory.   If indeed thought is influenced by language then many dominant articulations of the world are possibly pre-social or even biologically based, hence 'ultimately anathema to critical theory' (Pennycook, 2004, p. 222).

In a similar vein we have the issue of smell, taste, sound, feel and possible additional sensory perceptions.   Many mammals are known to have better auditory capabilities than us, bats navigate by a form of radar and birds and snakes, it is thought, can navigate by means of magnetic orientation.   All this goes to prove is that our perception of the "real" world is not, perhaps, perfect and also clearly not the same as other species or indeed (and more importantly) not even the same as all other members of the human

race. That is to say that we all perceive and understand the world in different ways based on our own understanding and utilising our own language. I can tell you how I perceive the smell of the colour pink but if you have no prior experience of this level of understanding then you will be unable (even if you are willing) to conceive of my perception.

1.4 Reflexivity

I would now like to move on to the subject of Reflexivity. Reflexivity could be defined as questioning the question or as reflection on a number of different levels. Buroway (2004) looks at reflexivity as being more interested in the means than the ends. Reflexivity is not value neutral and necessitates examination of the consequences of the knowledge production or more fundamentally the knowledge on which it was based. More specifically; what is the purpose of this knowledge and who is it for? When I am with a class of students (undergraduate or postgraduate) and I give them an article to analyse, the key questions that I always ask them are:

- Who wrote this and what are their biases?
- What do they want me to believe?
- Does their evidence back up their claim (remembering that much could have been omitted)?
- Overall do I agree with their analysis and conclusions?

George Monbiot of the Guardian newspaper offers similar warnings with perhaps a slightly more alarmist tone. [19]

The issue of reflexivity can be divided into two categories (Harding S. , 1987), epistemic and methodological. Epistemic reflexivity focuses on the researcher and how

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[19] By George Monbiot, published on the Guardian's website 29th November 2013

his or her beliefs may change dependent on the time, location and values. By means of a researcher's biography, it is possible to analyse what influences have impacted their understanding of extant knowledge (Ashmore, 1989). Methodological reflexivity is more concerned with how the researcher's behaviour can influence research results and hence is loved more by those of an objectivist ontology. Whilst those of a subjectivist ontology will be more drawn to epistemic reflexivity (Wong, Wong, & Musa, forthcoming). Hyper-reflexivity obtains when a researcher pursues both types of reflexivity simultaneously. I would position my research as primarily epistemic but with elements of methodological reflexivity creeping in. I would not, however, describe this research as hyper-reflexive.

Continuing the theme of improving my professional practice into the second domain of my career - that of education - it would seem that there also is a lacuna as identified by "the failure of marketing academics to represent practice or to alter it in significantly positive ways" (Catterall, 1999). This seems to still largely be the case as exemplified by several writers (Schroeder, 2007), (Tregear, Brennan, & Kuznesof, 2007).

Indeed, there may be a requirement for greater interaction between marketing scholars and marketing actors, if significant advances are to be made (Tadajewski, 2010). On a more general level, a criticism of management research is that much of it serves the primary purpose of Cultural Doping, that is as a method of influencing employee's attitudes to work, employment and management (Alvesson & Deetz, 1996). This is a feature of Critical theory, that it regards much of management theory as an agent of capitalism. Critical theory does not suggest that values should or can be removed from research (Prasad & Caproni, 1997), but that the researcher needs to continuously evaluate their values and how they may be influencing their findings (Calhoun, 1995). The theory underlying this is that people are social beings and need to be aware of

coercion and hidden influences hence achieving enlightenment and emancipation. Thus, whilst theories in the natural sciences are objectifying, critical theories are reflective (Geuss, 1981)

Methodologically this, however, begs the question as to whether this is even theoretically attainable. Quantz (1992) for example doubts the ability of critical theory researchers to dissociate themselves from what he terms "false consciousness". That is to say, in practice it is extremely difficult to not impose your own voice or values onto the study. I therefore cannot guarantee that I will achieve a continuous reassessment of the impact of my values. I will, however, endeavour to do so.

1.5 Continuous Improvement

Writing a PhD is a major undertaking, see for example Connell (1985), Phillips & Pugh (1998) and Wong (2007) amongst many others, that requires discipline, effort, time management skills, creative writing skills and (hopefully) also positive feedback from colleagues who have offered to read and comment on various sections and not forgetting my Supervisors. Reflection on what one has written and subsequent crafting and re-crafting are also called for. Past experience has taught me that the best way to succeed in writing a lengthy written report or plan is to firstly, have a clear block of time in order to make a good substantial start to the task and secondly, a hard (albeit sometimes arbitrary) deadline. Past experience has taught me that this way does work. Past experience has also taught me that it does not work terribly well.

The first problem is finding a sufficiently clear block of time. This is sometimes referred to as "A" Time where tasks that are considered "Important" but "Not Urgent" are undertaken (Covey, 1989). In theory, one is meant to block out clear periods where such "A" time issues are addressed. Unfortunately, in real life it is frequently difficult

to carve out these sanctified oases of calm and solitude. More likely, other pressing demands come your way and the irksome task is postponed once again. This is often referred to as Gresham's Law of Planning. Similar in concept to Sir Thomas Gresham's[20] idea of bad (i.e. adulterated) money driving out good coinage, this explains why effective planning and organisation are so difficult in practice. I remember this as I used to study at City University Business School under a wonderful Economics lecturer called Dr. Jonathan Boswell on Gresham St – named after Sir Thomas Gresham. [21]. Bob Dick (2002, p. 168) has also identified four traps of procrastination whilst undertaking an action research thesis or dissertation, which have an oddly intoxicating circularity to them –

- Postponing data collection until all the relevant literature has been read

- Postponing analysis until all the data has been collected.

- Postponing action (i.e. intervention or development moves) until all data has been interpreted.

- Postponing writing until all other aspects of the research are complete.

In addition to lack of time and procrastination, there is also the question of the deadline. This does indeed pressurise one into frenzied activity. However, this mitigates against Quality and can lead to stress and risks complete failure when force majeure dictates that some other really important task takes priority. In addition, the time available for reflection and re-crafting is reduced and Quality[22] also suffers.

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[20] Sir Thomas Gresham (1519-1579) was an English merchant and financier. He provided funds for the establishment of Gresham College in London in 1597.

[21] Indeed as an alumnus of City University (or CASS as it is now known) I now bear the sobriquet of "Gresham Grasshopper".

[22] I take Quality not to mean some physical/engineering measurement of goodness for purpose, but more metaphysically as perception or related to the interface between the user and the object/service. (Jacoby & Olsen, 1985)

Oddly enough, I am actually quite good at explaining deadlines to my Students. I can clearly differentiate between a hard deadline (such as flight SQ52 SIN-BNE departs at 16:30) which cannot be negotiated (sorry the traffic is terrible, is it ok if I am 15 minutes late please?) and a soft deadline (please submit the Vietnamese scripts to the exam office by Tuesday). The reality is that sometimes, soft deadlines can be as useful in precipitating action as hard deadlines.

As I now reflect on my professional career, I realise that this has been very much my modus operandi. I have become quite good at it and indeed often took pride in my ability to take on complex tasks at very short notice and still be able to make rather a good fist of it. I will reflect on this further in the section concerning my analysis of the content of my dreams.

But I now realise that I was merely creating a rod for my own back and that my work could have been so much better.

The answer lies in the well-known Taoist quotation – The Journey of a Thousand Miles starts with a Single Step (Hoff, 1982, p. 12). This has been rather neatly applied to the problems of creative writing by Gray (2005). She relied fairly heavily on the work of Boice (1990) who had come to the conclusion that the solution was to write a small amount every day, about 15 minutes or so. Gray went even further and opined that once reaching 30 minutes, one should stop.

The major purpose of my action research is to identify ways in which I can improve my professional practice. And as a result of reflection, I have made one very substantial correction to my modus operandi which I believe will have many long term benefits to my productivity, job satisfaction and health. The improvement has been my resolve to write a wee bit every day, whether on a written paper, case study or magazine article. This has been compared to both the practice and benefit of meditation (Furman & Kinn,

2012), frequent practice and incorporation into a daily routine reduces writers block and also sharpens the finished article (if not the pen).

Continuous improvement [23] to a process or system was one of the concepts introduced by Deming (1986 & 2000) to Japan after the Second World War (WWII).

Figure 1.4   Deming's Circle of Quality

In many ways, it can be seen as similar to the work of Lewin (1946), who is known particularly for his work on change management, but the underlying idea is the same. Using a process of Unfreezing, Implementing the change and then Refreezing, somewhat akin to the idea of working with a block of ice.   With the addition of a feedback loop it mirrors Deming's Quality circle. For example workers may participate in a discussion as to what was good about the process and what was bad.   From this, ideas can be generated as to how the process can be improved.   Surprisingly enough this seems very similar to the cycle: Plan.....> Act.....>Observe.....>Reflect... (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). In this cycle the "Observe" is commensurate with Check, but the "Reflects" activity makes sense as an additional check, and "Act" and "Do" in Deming's circle appear very similar.

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[23] "Kaizen" in Japanese

The word Kaizen in Japanese is interesting in its etymology (not that I am a student of linguistics). On initial examination, the first symbol (Kai) means 'Change' and the second (Zen) means 'Good', which might seem obvious enough. However, the first symbol also encapsulates Self and Whip marks, i.e. self-flagellation. So, to undertake change necessarily involves pain. The second symbol (Zen) shows a sheep or goat on a sacrificial altar, hence sacrifices must be made.

改善

Figure 1.5   The Chinese symbols for Kaizen

I find this interesting from a cultural perspective as in the West 'change' is often portrayed as progressive and the negative aspects are usually glossed over.[24]   The understanding that some hardship and sacrifices will be required seems to be a valuable mind-set preparation.   Fortunately the pain that I have experienced in life has been quite minimal, compared for example to Moira Laidlaw (2012) who has written of adapting to culture shock whilst battling a painful disability in isolation. It is useful to remember that no matter how bad you feel your situation to be, there will always be many more people in even less invidious positions and yet they too, can pull through.

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[24] In Scotland the term used for the masters of change in the 18th Century was "The Improvers", yet the people whose crofts were burned down to make way for sheep on the hillside may not have seen this as anything remotely related to a Pareto improvement (Hobsbawm, 1980). However, it is true that through change, that advancements are made (Smout, 2012)

Kant (2005) recognised the importance of both sacrifice and luck (or serendipity as I refer to it). Sacrifice may be a necessary condition for achieving a rich and fulfilling life but this is no guarantee of ultimate reward, luck plays its part too. Luck alone may deliver some tangible payoffs in life, but improvement will necessitate both effort and pain in order to achieve an updent[25] to behaviour patterns and efficacy of one's actions. I will refer to the drivers of my own improvement in later sections but suffice it to say that both sacrifice and serendipity (or more practically – making your own luck) play key rôles.
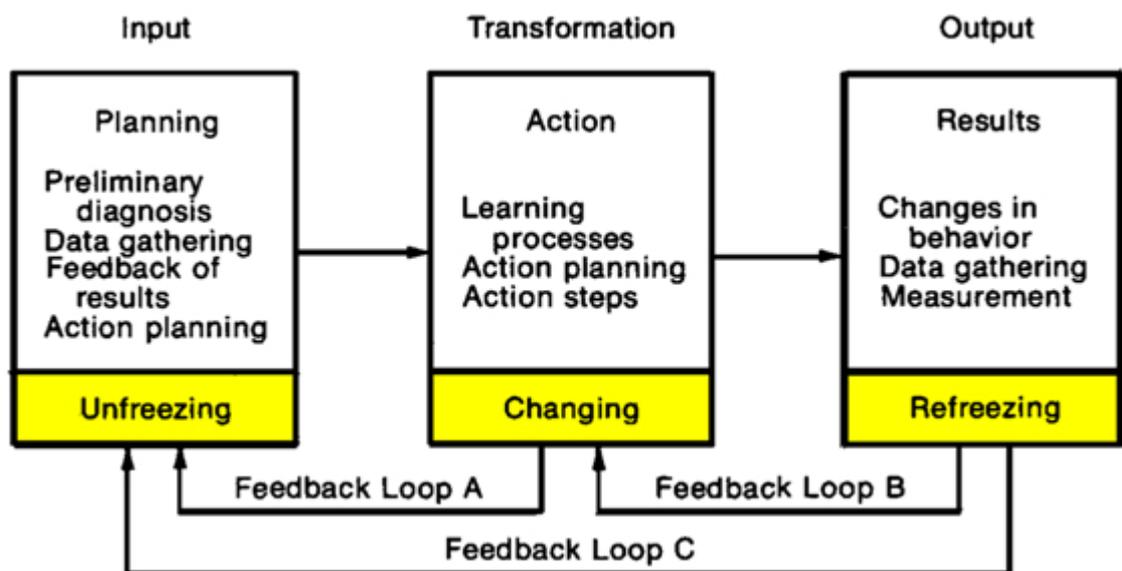
Figure 1.6   Kurt Lewin's Change Model

Kurt Lewin is less well known for his work on Field Theory. Lewin defined a field as a totality of co-existing facts which are conceived of as mutually interdependent. Hence individual behaviour is a function of the group environment or field. Action Research draws on both Field Theory and Group Dynamics to understand how and why

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[25] See Abbreviations & Definitions

individuals operate in certain situations (Burnes, 2004). The interaction of coexisting mutually interdependent facts is now seen as very similar to the concept of complex (or non-linear) systems used in Chaos and Catastrophe theory (Back, 1992), (Bechtold, 1997) and (Black, 2000). Chaos and its apparent randomness seem to also fit well with both my 'Gently' theory (explained in a later section) and that of Lewin's Field Theory. "The flap of a butterfly's wing in Brazil can set off a tornado in Texas" (Lorenz, 1995). If a butterfly in Brazil can set off a tornado in Texas – what are the implications of my actions and those of my colleagues? My study may be seen as applying Grounded theory (Glaser, 1998) (Glaser & Strauss, 2009) to the Field of Marketing. It is a Constructivist rather than Objectivist approach as the former rejects the idea of only one reality (Charmaz, 2014).

Lewin (1946, p206) described Action Research as proceeding in a spiral of steps each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action and fact finding about the results of the action. The underlying foundations lay in the area of Gestalt psychology whereby change in individuals can only occur by helping people to reflect and gain insights into their position. Action Research relies on Field Theory to understand how group behaviour will influence the individual. This is the Spiral of Continuous Improvement which is shown in the Figure 1.7 below, this has been termed the "Virtuous Spiral" (Dick B. , 2002, p. 164). With each turn of the spiral, you are able to simultaneously test your interpretations and refine your plan for further improvements.
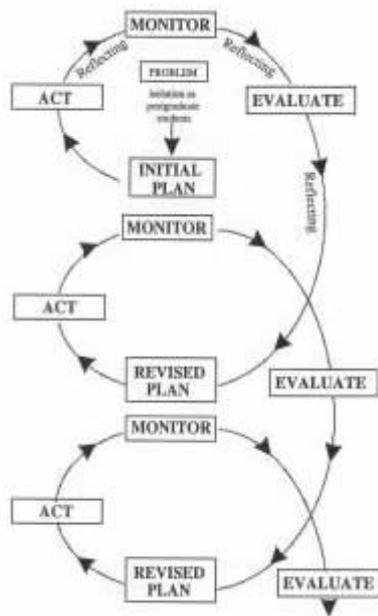
Figure 1.7 The Spiral Circles of Action Research Methodology

Kemmis (1988, p. 29) has what I consider an apt description of this spiral of circles "analysis, fact-finding, conceptualization, planning, execution, more fact finding or evaluation and then a repetition of this whole circle of activities".

One necessary condition for the success of an Action Research initiative is the acceptance of the need for change. This corresponds to the unfreezing step in Lewin's change model and follows from an individual internalising the discord between the current and desired position followed by the determination to act upon it.

The purpose of Action Research is to improve practice, enhance skill levels and develop the researcher's ability to critically evaluate his or her actions. This then leads to a virtuous circle whereby the researcher is able to look at different courses of action and more regularly, select effective and efficient solutions. This history and development of action research was very much in the area of education – and still much of the

literature is education based, and indeed there is one academic journal specifically dedicated to it – 'Educational Action Research'. There is a slight semantic difference between Action Research & Action Learning which I would like to clear away now at this early stage in proceedings.   To all intents and purposes they are the same thing. However, the difference could be said to be that Action Learning relates more to a Group than an Individual. More specifically in Action Learning different participants draw different conclusions from different experiences, whereas in Action Research a team of people draw collective learning from a collective experience (Dick B. , 1997). Is has also been referred to as Action Science (Argyris & Schön, 1989), with some differences, but this term is not currently in vogue.

There are a number of big differences between "normal" Social Science Research and Action Research which I summarise below.

Social Science Research	Action Research
Theory to inform practice	Theory developed through practice
Largely deductive	Largely Inductive
Outsider	Insider
Theory driven	Change Driven

Figure 1.8 Social Science Research

Source: Associate Professor Dr. Tony Harland (Higher Education Development Centre, University of Otago) from the AKEPT conference in November 2009.

I might also add that traditional research is necessarily focused on the past and possibly the recent present.   Action Research is focused on the present and very much on the future.

In my case, the circle does indeed come back to Education. However, the starting point is a career in Marketing from which I have moved to that of an Academic in a University. It could be said that the purpose of my thesis is to benefit society primarily through my students, but also marketing practitioners by means of my written papers. I do this by firstly understanding and critically reviewing my past actions and then seeking specific learning points as to how I could improve my practice. My hope is that I may also be able in some small way, to imbue my students with the same reflexive or critical perspective on what they hear or read (Mingers, 2000).

I have followed this ideal of continuous improvement (or Kai Zen) right from my early days as a Market Analyst in the Automobile Association back in 1973 when I first reviewed a retail process change at the main Members' Service Centre [26] in Leicester Square in London. The technique that I used then was essentially the same as I now use today, essentially it was to describe the two best things about the change and the one worst. As I recall, I was not successful in eliciting much qualitative (or indeed any useful) feedback on that first occasion, but I have experimented and improved on it since. And indeed, it now fulfils a central rôle in my methodology.

It is, however, unusual to apply Action Research to the corporate arena, van Tuyl's (2010) PhD thesis being one of a few notable exceptions. Much of the literature relates to education, social services, the police force, and hospitals etc. i.e. areas where the client is typically in a low power position. For example, if we examine the Mission statement from the Action Research Center at the University of Cincinnati it is:

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[26] Service Centres was the term used by the AA for a retail outlet. In the early 1970s, the employees in the Service Centres were referred to as Member Service Operators (or MSOs) which reflected the then non-profit ethic of the members club.

"To promote social justice and strengthen communities, locally and globally, by advancing research, education, and action through participatory and reflective practices."

The process is seen as been collaborative, participatory and democratic and with the objective of empowering the community.   This is clearly not the language of business.

At some stage in my analysis, I need to consider academic rigour, and this is certainly something that at least one segment of my target audience will also be justifiably concerned with.   Academic rigour is tied to concepts such as validity but one can also assess the pragmatic outcomes.   In this sense, rigour may be defined as "an outcome of those research methods which yield useful models". (Dick B. , 1999).

Figure 1.9   Flow Chart Methodology of the Heuristically Critical Reflexive Practitioner Approach (Reason & Bradbury, 2006)

Flow Chart Methodology of the
Heuristically Critical Reflexive Practitioner Approach
(Reason & Bradbury)
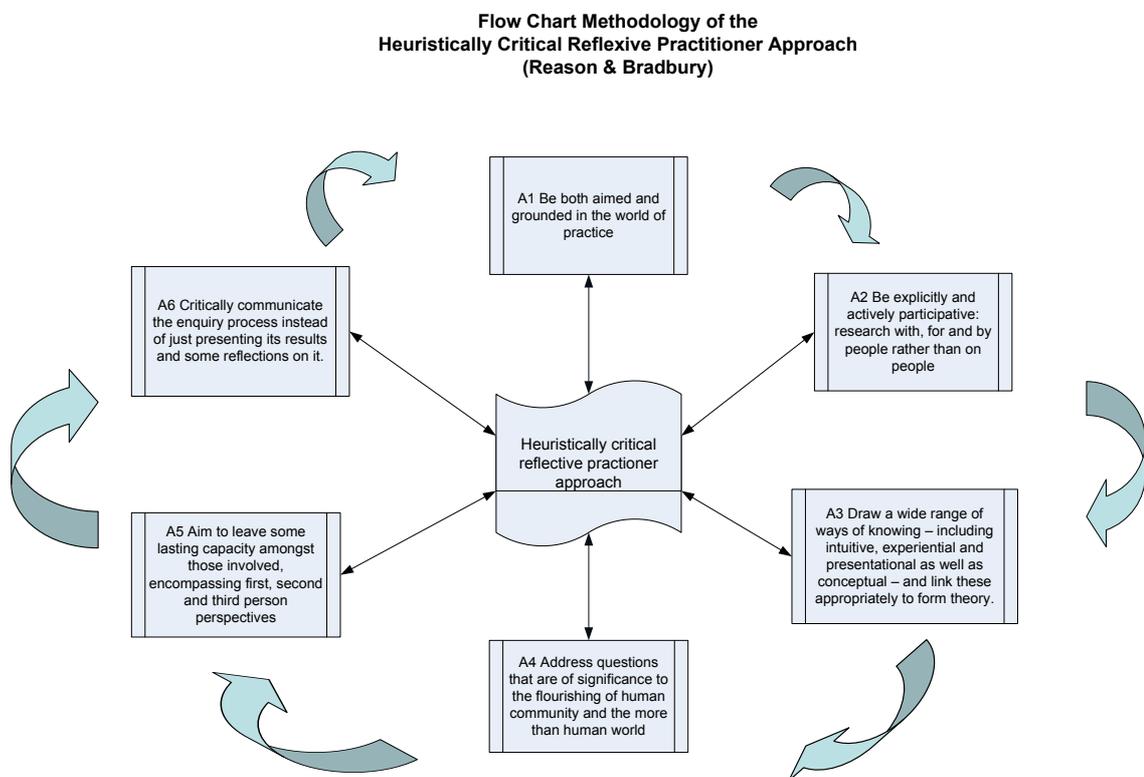
Reflection from the West has connotations of an individual (selfish?) perspective. From an Oriental perspective, it is more orientated towards the common weal[27]. I wish to include both orientations in this thesis, partly because I have lived and worked in both geographical regions, but more particularly because I believe this to be a more solid philosophical perspective.

It would be remiss of me not to mention my own professional body, The Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) and what they do to assist in terms of continuous personal development. They operate a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programme (which is essentially self-administered) whereby suitably qualified Marketeers may log their learning, writing, presenting etc. activities with the Institute – backed up by various types of evidence (hard copy, web log in for Webinars etc.) By maintaining a minimum number of hours per year, the status of "Chartered Marketer" may be retained. Although, this system may indeed encourage Marketeers to participate in seminars and professional training there is no test of whether any real improvement in professional practice is actually realised.

It is for this reason that I have never enrolled on the programme although, I do avail myself of whatever educational updates or webinars that they may offer from time to time. I must admit I am also suspicious of the "Chartered Marketer" status and very much doubt if it carries any weight in any professional situation. As with many things in life, I am quite prepared to be proved wrong on this. The openness to constructive criticism is fundamental to the action researcher as s/he undergoes continuous cycles of reflective analysis.

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[27] Using Scots terminology: the common welfare; public good., (Kernerman Webster's College Dictionary, 2010)

Marketing as a discipline has tended to be far less concerned with introspection and far more concerned with raising its professional profile whilst simultaneously convincing the business community that it truly works (half my advertising budget is wasted, the only problem is that I don't know which half)[28]. Possibly, for these reasons very little has been published about action research in Marketing. Similarly, a critical theoretic approach has also been lacking despite the fact that similar professional disciplines like Management Accounting did so over thirty years ago (Burton D. , 2001).

1.6 What is it that I wish to improve?

When I teach Strategy, I always emphasise the importance of a clear Objective followed by specific Goals, aligned Strategies, quantifiable Measures and coherent tactics. The OGSMt model for short. It is also common to require the approach to be SMART (Doran, 1981), i.e. Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time bound.

There is of course, some confusion both in the English Dictionary (which asserts that Goals are of a broader and more long term nature than Objectives) and also in management literature as to which is of the higher order – Goals or Objectives. In this thesis, I am using the word 'Objective' to denote the overarching single thing that one wishes to achieve (e.g. Win the War)[29]. Peter Drucker also used the term Objective in that sense, although for him it was in the plural, i.e. Management by Objectives not Management by Objective. He did, however, agree that direct line reports may have an individual objective (adding up to a number of objectives) but for the General Manager these could be aggregated into one overall Objective. Goals may illustrate how we can

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[28] attributed to John Wanamaker, 1838 – 1922

[29] The word 'Strategy' comes from the Greek word 'Strategos' which means to lead an army; thus it is no accident that so much of the terminology has military connotations.

assess how close we are to achieving our Objective. In some ways they are similar to "Milestones" in Project Management terminology but also necessarily include some tangible "deliverable". (E.g. neutralise the airport, knock out the radio station and capture the Capital). I am somewhat reassured on my terminology on re-discovering one of my old textbooks on Corporate Planning (Argenti, 1968), which does indeed refer to the 'Objective' in the singular "Step 1: Determine the company's objective and decide on a target" (p. 27).

I believe my Objective to be clear. The process of Self-Reflection is one of my strategies but I need to be rigorous in the application of both Goals and Measures or else the enterprise is nugatory.

What I wish to improve is self-determined, but improvement has to be relative to past behaviour and therefore evident to others (my target market, if you wish). Self-assessment introduces a potentially fatal methodological conundrum.

Goals are in some senses easier to determine than measures. A Goal should indicate achievement along a route to a particular Objective. The selection of one Goal over another is not necessarily critical, they are merely signposts as to whether the mission is on track or not. The same is not true for Measures.

"You cannot manage what you cannot measure.

And what gets measured gets done".

Bill Hewlett of Hewlett Packard (House, 1991)

This line of thought derives from Peter Drucker and the theory of Management by Objectives. On the other hand, there is also the Goodhardt's Law which states defining a measure and making that measure into a Target, is akin to trying to measure

the width of a balloon using a tight string, this will cause expansion elsewhere so the measure becomes meaningless at best and counterproductive at worst.   Focusing on certain areas to the detriment of others, as Deming said in his Fourteen essential points of Quality, is once again pointless.

As an Economist[30] , I love apposite measures – no matter how idiosyncratic as I believe this drives insight.   Sir Edward Heath (at that time the UK President of the Board of Trade,) was frustrated with the Civil Service during the era of the UK Balance of Payments problems and could not understand why the 'flash' statistics were available so quickly and were so accurate whilst the 'real' numbers took months to calculate. Eventually he took the Chief Statistician to task and enquired whether it would not be possible to just introduce a bit more rigour into the flash statistics and release the official numbers much earlier. The reply surprised him – that they would then have to *add up* the value of all the import and export transactions which would take just as long as the current method.   The flash method on the other hand was simply to *weigh* the import and export documentation and use a simple correlation to estimate pounds weight to pounds sterling.[31]   So, in summary, both an effective and accurate measure.

I remembered this example when I worked in MSAS and for reasons unbeknown to the rest of us, the CEO seemed to have an amazingly good idea of how well we were doing even before our weekly statistics had been issued.   The Managing Director would ask me to speed up the production of the data but with the best will in the world the following Tuesday was the best that could be humanly achieved. Yet the CEO would call on the Monday morning to tell us; whether the week had been good, average or

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[30] Following Douglas Hague's (Hague, 1969) typology whereby Marketing is a sub-branch of normative micro-economics or managerial economics (as pioneered by Joel Dean (1951)) concerned with the application of theory to industrial problems which require a pragmatic solution.

[31] New Scientist, 9th September 1976, p568

poor. The MD was distraught and wanted to be able to converse with his line manager on an equal footing of information. Desperate but futile efforts to speed up our reporting system followed. Sometime later, we discovered the source of the CEO's insight. The Courier who delivered materials to our Head Office in Bracknell on a Monday morning also worked in our warehouse over the weekend (Friday was by far our busiest day of the week). He was asked how much overtime he had been able to work – none, a bit or a lot. Using this simple metric, our CEO was able to ascertain how good our week had been.

I now find that there is also a very high correlation between the marks of my MBA students in their final exam and the numbers of pages that they have written. It is unlikely that any exam board would ever accept such a measure, but it surely would enable far faster release of results.

Deming also said "beware of numbers and know how to use them". Hard statistics may seem difficult to argue with, but the costs of a training course are easy to measure on today's balance sheet – whilst the benefits may endure for decades but are difficult to quantify as Herzberg has pointed out. A real life example of this was an accounting supervisor in DHL who was told that the average cost of sending a dunning letter to a creditor was in the region of £10. From this s/he calculated that any sum that we were owed that was less than £10, was not financially worth pursuing. Following this change in policy, we rapidly discovered that our cash flow was deteriorating, as was our revenue. An analysis of major customers, account losses and credits failed to reveal any fundamental problems.

Eventually, the source of the problem was identified (and easily rectified). But the numbers were correct. The cost of sending a letter to a Customer was indeed in the region of £10, but in addition to the time spent to pen the letter, the cost of the

stationary, stamp etc. had also been added on the lease cost of the office, the maintenance and utility costs, HR and the Managing Director's salary – all as part of our Activity Based Costing method in which every cost has to be allocated to a product and/or an activity.   So the relevant number for deciding whether to issue a dunning letter is not the average cost – but the marginal cost (probably in the region of about £1).

I detail below the control sheet that I use for this thesis, showing the Objective, Goals, Strategies Measures and tactics[32].   It is a living document in the same sense that Deming intended, rather than a static one off statement of the current position.   Tactics may well change on a frequent basis, Strategies less often.   The Objective is very unlikely to change, but if it is found to be unrealistic or unattainable then it must, necessarily, be re-evaluated and reformulated.   Setting the bar high may well ensure that "you do not end up with a handful of earth" as one of my previous line managers once said.   But set too high and disillusionment, hopelessness and retreat will surely follow.

Strategies may not work for a variety of reasons.   The strategy selected might be the wrong choice, making fundamental mistakes on the underlying assumptions or misreading likely competitor moves (Brandenburger & Nalebuff, 1996).   But it is possible that it was the correct (or optimal) strategy and the only reason that it has not worked, is that the overall market is in decline[33].   More fundamentally it may simply be that one has been unlucky.   I once observed a football match in which the away team dominated the game with silky skills and outshot the home team by a factor of two to

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[32] There is no definitive agreement on the hierarchy of Goals and Objectives, different writers also use other terms like Aims and Targets.   See for example (Richards, 1986).

[33] In conversation with one of my former adversaries in a bar in Brussels, I discovered that the reason for the FedEx withdrawal from Europe in the late 1980s was that they thought they were losing market share. In fact our analysis at that time showed that they were doing very well in a recessionary market.

one. Somewhat surprisingly,[34] after some 60 minutes play they were 0-3 down. The question for the coach is what should s/he change? Analysis is key, if the strategy has not yet had a chance to work or Lady Luck has turned her back then changing strategy may not actually be the best move.

I once had the opportunity to interview David Sainsbury (of the Sainsbury Supermarket chain in the UK), the topic was Operation Checkout and the Grocery Price War. In a competitor reaction to Tesco's withdrawal of Green Shield Stamps and vigorous price reductions, he noted that a positive response was required, simply because to continue "the game" under the extant rules would mean defeat.

OBJECTIVE:	
GOALS:	
STRATEGIES:	tactics:
MEASURES:	

Figure 1.10 OGSMt Framework

As regards Measures I could adopt Bloom's (Bloom, 1956) taxonomy of Cognitive, Affective and Psychomotor skills. These would be most relevant if I perceive myself

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[34] Or not, depending on whether you are a student of probability or statistics (Moroney, 1956)

as a lifelong learner[35] but they can also be applied in more general situations. If I consider myself purely in the rôle of a University academic, then I require measures that relate to Teaching or Research or indeed, both. If I perceive myself as an international Marketeer then a Competency Framework developed for international executives would be more applicable. I detail the Competency Framework as it was in use in DHL in the early 2000s below.

DHL COMPETENCY MENU

PERSONAL	COGNITIVE	INTERPERSONAL	LEADERSHIP/ PEOPLE MANAGEMENT	BUSINESS
Accountability	Analysis	Building and Managing Partnerships	Building and Leading Teams	Business Acumen
Adaptability	Attention to Detail	Communication	Building Competitive Advantage	Customer Orientation
Commitment to Excel	Decision Making	Influence	Constructive Challenge	DHL Knowledge
Confidence	Information Seeking	Interacting with People	Developing People Maximizing Individual Performance	Global Perspective
Initiative	Innovation	Negotiation Organizational Awareness	Visionary Leadership	Job Expertise
Tolerance for Stress	Planning and Organizing	Teamwork	Shaping Direction	Market Focus
	Understanding the Key Issue			

Competencies are any *essential* skill, knowledge,
and individual qualities, which lead to *superior* performance in a job role.

Figure 1.11   Managerial Competency Framework

The Competency Framework is more rigorous, but I also need to consider who I am and what I am doing in order to select the most apposite measures. Additionally, I should select a methodology which is forward rather than backward looking. The Balanced Scorecard (Kaplan, 2001) is in theory the best approach for a number of reasons, the

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[35] I do see myself as a lifelong learner, or as Socrates put it – touched with the madness of philosophia, the love of wisdom (Plato, 2005), others might see me as merely a perpetual student.

main one being, that it considers all of the major areas relevant to the long term success of an enterprise. That is not to say that it works well.   The Devil hides in the detail and this was what DHL discovered in the early 2000s.   The key data required were not available so the numbers which were available (although not necessarily relevant) were used instead.

As my intent is to advance the theory of a Global Professional using Action Research as the most appropriate approach (Perry & Zuber-Skerrit, 1992)   with the Managerial Competency Framework but enhanced, where possible, with forward looking rather than lagging indicators. For this reason, I rate Personal and Industry Networks as a particularly useful additional measure.   Additionally in terms of informational content I do not find "Business" a useful descriptor, Commercial Acumen seems more apposite.

I have already referred to the Global nature of my career. Within this context, it is likely that inter-cultural adaptability is a likely determinant of success.   This is termed intercultural maturity (King & Magolda, 2005) and can be divided into three attributes; Understanding (the cognitive dimension, sensitivity to others (the interpersonal dimension) and a sense of oneself that enables one to listen to and learn from others (the intrapersonal dimension).   This latter attribute relates to understanding how one's existing paradigms and epistemologies may be deficient or at the very least, in need of questioning.

OBJECTIVE: To communicate how I improve my practice as a Global Professional.	
GOALS: 1. Publish 5 peer reviewed articles in ISI ranked journals by end 2013 2. Complete a 1st thesis draft by end 2013.	
STRATEGIES: 1. Benchmark best practice in the field of Qualitative Research. 2. Establish effective and efficient work routines. 3. Elicit feedback from professional contemporaries. 4. Receive critical peer feedback and reflect on how this feedback should be utilised.	tactics: i). Attend a PhD course on the Philosophy of Managerial Research (2011). ii). Discipline of writing 15 minutes per day. iii). Subscribe to the AEROL on-line course on Action Research (2013). iv). Maximise on-line contacts (Linked-In, Facebook, e-mail etc.) v). Present at an International forum (2013/14) vi) Complete a Bahasa Melayu exit exam.
MEASURES: Articles Published, Date of 1st draft completion, Competencies (Personal, Cognitive, Interpersonal, Leadership, Commercial acumen, Inter-Cultural Maturity).	

Figure 1.12 OGSMt Framework for my thesis

There is scope for some confusion here as I am effectively operating two research activities simultaneously; the first is the core action research designed to answer the question of "How do I improve my professional practice", the second is my thesis research.   As Zuber-Skerritt & Fletcher (2007) identified there is a dynamic inter-relationship between the two modalities, however, in this case the 'interference' of collaborative influences are limited.

Note that each tactic may support one or more Strategies, there is no necessary one for one relationship.   The Objective does not change through time, but the Goals and tactics may be updated or revised regularly.   The Strategies are unlikely to change,

although this is possible – particularly if they appear to be inappropriate or failing in some respect.

It is a criticism of modern management (Goddard & Eccles, 2013) that planning and control are the enemies of creativity.   In the diagram below, they suggest that organisations are fixated on the left hand (Control) side to the detriment of experiments and idea generation (the Learning cycle shown on the right).   I would support this position, but would go further to say that Action Research (and indeed Action Learning) need to be more positively embedded in individual and organizational work practices.

CONTROL CYCLE   **LEARNING CYCLE**

Measures   Targets   Questions   Ideas

Rewards   Belief System   Belief System   Experiments
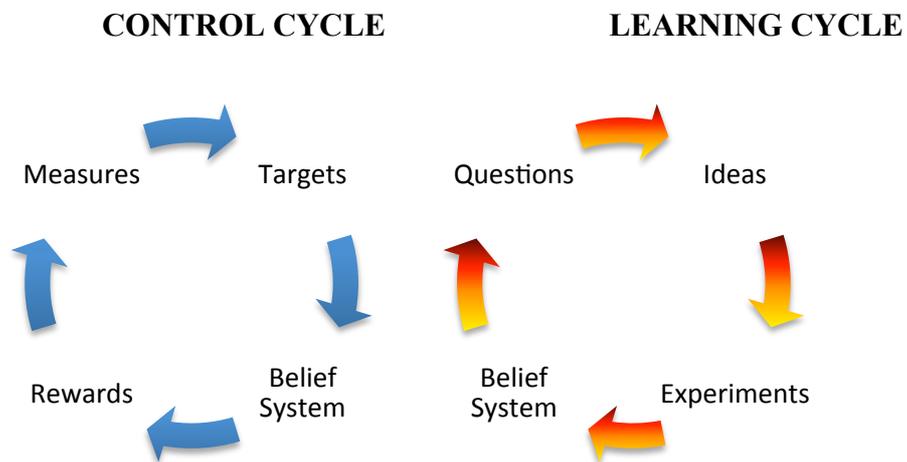
Figure 1.13   The Control/Learning Cycle

Chris Argyris (1964) also suggested that experimentation and discovery could only incur after an inversion of beliefs.

1.7 Self-Reflection (?)

So a key question to answer early in the piece: Am I naturally self-reflective? In other words – Am I qualified in my own mind to undertake this journey?

Firstly I need to differentiate between 'reflection' and 'reflective practice'. Reflection is considered by Dewey (1933) & (1938) as a process or activity that is central to improving practice.   Loughran (1996, p. 14), building on the work of Dewey, defined reflection as *"the deliberate and purposeful act of thinking which centres on ways of responding to problem situations"*.   So, reflection is concerned with thinking about problem definition and solutions.

'Reflective practice' entered the lexicon with the works of Schön (1983) and he differentiated between reflection **on** action and reflection **in** action. The former relates the process of considering prior practice with a view to future improvement, whereas the latter includes the interaction of doing and thinking which lead to a tacit improvement.   Tacit improvement relates to capability and competence in action, it is (by definition) hard to codify but it is possibly more important to the formulation of the elixir of success than is perhaps more commonly recognised and this is a central contention of this thesis.

As I reflect on this, and I consider my answer carefully, I conclude that there are some strands that would seem to suggest that I am naturally reflective. I also suspect that I am going to have to reflect on this a good bit longer before I can fully connect all the strands. Perhaps I might need to commission a holistic detective agency to provide a complete answer. But this may be a task to be undertaken only after this particular work is completed.

My Father kept himself physically fit for all of his life, until he died, suddenly, of cancer the very year he retired.   He did smoke (as many of his generation did) either cigarettes or (probably for effect) a pipe. But otherwise, his alcohol intake was modest and he exercised regularly using the Canadian Air Force 5BX plan – this book and a very few others are all I have left in the way of tangible mementoes of his life. So of

these strands. What are they? Well, I seem to have picked up on my Father's drive for fitness and have regularly engaged in active sport of one form or another all of my life (Football, Squash, Cricket, Cycling, Running, Karate and Diving) although, I have never been particularly good at any of them. Karate includes brief spells of meditation in the Dojo at the beginning and end of exercise as time for reflection. In the early 1980s, I attended some of Professor Eileen Barker's undergraduate classes on Ethics and Moral Philosophy[36] at the London School of Economics as I searched for some satisfactory explanations of life. I found this experience most satisfying. I did indeed discover that there were no simple answers but I felt that I now had the toolkit to discover for myself the meaning of life and my place in it.[37]

On reflection, the thing I think I gained most from this period of my life was the ability to think reflexively. That is, to actively consider the purpose and essence of my existence. I cannot say that I have moved too far in sketching the outline of an acceptable answer to this question. But I did fully understand that being true to oneself was a necessary building block on the route to self-actualisation. To quote Carl Jung "The only meaningful life is a life that strives for the individual realisation – absolute and unconditional- of its own particular law... To the extent that a man is untrue to the law of his being... he has failed to realise his life's meaning."

Sometime in my Bucks era (i.e. 1984 to 1997) I decided to undertake a Transcendental Meditation (TM) course. I did this for very pragmatic and practical reasons: Firstly so I could I waste less time on sleep and secondly, to become more effective in my work.

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[36] The clearest distinction that I can find between Ethics and Morals is the one supplied by Ronald Dworkin (2011) which sees Ethics as related to how to live well whereas Morals is more concerned about our behaviour towards other people. This, I would extend (in the case of Morals) to all sentient beings, and as Science now advises us, this may be a far larger set of life forms than we had originally envisaged.

[37] I now realise that just reading Hitch Hikers Guide to the Galaxy (Adams, 1979) might have got me there a lot earlier and with a lot less effort. Zen and the art of Motorcycle Maintenance (Pirsig, 1974) would probably have helped too.

Was this experiment successful? The answer to the first was "No". And to the second "Possibly". But more importantly, I had suddenly discovered self-reflection. Seeing the gestalt without focusing too much attention on the detail may also be worthwhile traits. Tremmel (1993) suggests that Zen Buddhist concepts such as 'mindfulness' and 'paying attention' are given insufficient attention when engaged in critical reflection. Other writers such as Langer (1997)and Senge et al (Senge, George, & Bryan, 1999) realise that cognitive development depends on both formal and informal infrastructure support mechanisms. In other words, the opportunity to develop depends on the ability (and time) to reflect and how rigid (or flexible) previous forms of social schema or cognitive frameworks have proven to be.

I have maintained the TM discipline, not religiously, but when I have the time or feel the need.   I mentioned in a previous section the decay process implicit in Fluid Intelligence and the risks I face of this faculty disappearing through the passing of time. However, the good news for me (and possibly you too, gentle reader) is that the process of Transcendental Meditation assists in maintaining creativity through the ability to access free-flowing mental states (Travis, 1979), (Jedrczak, Beresford, & Clements, 1985) & (Claxton, 2002).

More specifically Fluid Intelligence has been found to significantly increase (along with General Intelligence) in numerous studies, in standardised tests (Dilbeck, Assimakis, Raimondi, Orme-Johnson, & Rowe, 1986), higher levels of moral reasoning (Alexander, et al., 1990), increased flexibility of perception and verbal problem solving (Dilbeck, 1982), and increased creativity and fluid and culture fair intelligence (Tim & Orme-Johnson, 2001).   Additionally, it was found to operationally increase 'wisdom' in a ten year longitudinal study by Chandler (1990).

As ever it would seem in my life, I did not reach this revelation by hard work and rigorous research, but rather stumbled upon it by chance. Some might call it "Luck".

Wadsworth (2010) maps the Plan, Observe, Act, Reflect cycle onto the Myers Briggs Type Inventory (Myers, McCaulley, Quenk, & Hammer, 1998) and came to the conclusion that any individual can inhabit any of these zones but s/he will still revert to preferred behaviour for much of the time. The ENTJ[38] (of which I have been variously tested to be) has a tendency to Plan based on the Wadsworth map. The art is to be able to move around the circle and not stay grounded in any one area. According to Wadsworth one of the objectives of the Mother and Daughter team was to facilitate self-improvement as well as helping others. More specifically, there were a number of applications in fields as diverse as institutionalisation, socialisation, criminalisation etc. (Wadsworth, 2005) (2008). Her analogy can also be coupled with the metaphors employed by Reason & Bradbury (2006) of the Compass, the Map and the Magnifying Glass and the Mirror. This is, I feel, a useful set of analogies, although my love of walking and cycling, maps and navigation may also be an influence here.

The idea of using pictorial metaphors within academe is not common but it possesses a well based foundation known as soft systems methodology (Checkland & Scholes, 1990). The technique applies the concept of rich pictures to assist in understanding complex issues (Hicks, 1991) (Williams M. C., 1998). Rich pictures can be symbols, cartoons and photographs which help the reader gain a fuller understanding of the issue or problem and will appeal to different audiences in different ways. Some people respond better to numbers or words, some respond better to pictures, the most effective communication will make appropriate use of all three hence, reaching right brained, left brained and people of a more centrist disposition.

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[38] ENTJ: Extrovert, Intuitive, Thinking & Judging

Reflecting both on my written work and also career as a PowerPoint Ranger I have much evidence of this form of andragogy right back to my late teens and early twenties. In addition to greater understanding, a rich picture or metaphor shifts people from one line of thinking about a subject into a parallel one which provides (in my view) a fresh perspective and hence greater appreciation of the problem or issue. It also provides a mental break which provides a rest in detailed subject matter and potentially some humour also. Once again, 'Fun' is a central theme to my life approach which I will refer to in later sections.

There are of course limitations to what self-reflection can achieve. As it is based on individual experiences and then related to theory it may not be capable of contributing greater understanding at a societal level. Hence, whilst it adds perspective, it is not sufficient to explain the workings of power and privilege in society (Noffke, 1997, p. 329) (or indeed the corporate context).

Self-Reflection is one essential component of critical thinking. Another is the hunger for knowledge. There are a number of measures for what some writers describe as "Curiosity" (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982) or more specifically "Typical Intellectual Engagement" (Goff & Ackerman, 1992). In terms of academic success Von Stumm found that Curiosity accounted for as much of the variance as effort and that curiosity and effort combined could have a greater impact than intelligence alone (Von Stumm, Hell, & Chammorro-Premuzic, 2011). I do consider myself as something of a Polymath, which I also recognise as not necessarily a good thing, but it is indicative of a hungry mind.

A third component of critical thinking is what Kegan (1982) (1994) termed the 'Level of Consciousness'. According to Kegan I have possibly (hopefully?) reached Order 4, this level of consciousness is characterised by the ability to be self-reflective and to

employ critical thinking. Order 0 is that of an Infant. Order 1 is that of a child aged two or over. Order 2 is also that of a child, but one that has developed logical organised thought. Order 3 is where this is developed into that of a socialised mind.

The most interesting of these is, however, Order 5. This is what Kegan describes as the Self-Transforming Mind. This is where individuals are able to project beyond themselves and more fully understand the interconnectedness of life, systems and other people. "This level is infrequently reached and never reached before the age of forty" (Kegan, 1994).

Research (Lahey, Souvaine, Kegan, & Goodman, 1988) suggests that, at any given time between half to two-thirds of the Adult population have not fully reached level (Order) Four.

In order to write authoritatively about the career of a Global Marketeer, this must necessarily be done with a sufficient history to be credible. But more importantly, had I embarked on this thesis much earlier, I could not possibly hope to achieve an Order 5 perspective, far less derive any Order 5 transformational learning.

Jackie Stewart once talked about the perfect drive – not on the circuit –but somewhere simple like work, or to drop his children off at school. He said he had never been able to achieve it. He could always see possible aspects of improvement. If this applied to Jackie Stewart (a three-time Formula 1 World Champion) then, *a fortiori,* it would also logically apply to me.[39]

I have maintained the practice of meditation ever since (less so during stressful or busy periods – which is when it would probably be of most value).

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[39] This tendency of looking for constant improvement has also manifested itself in my desire to improve my driving; firstly whilst working at the AA and taking the Institute of Advanced Motorists test and later in Florida with the local state driving exam and later with Police Riding courses and Advanced Riding courses in the UK after I had bought a motorbike.

So in answer to my question "Am I naturally self-reflective", I would have to assert that for the most part I am.

1.8 Who Am I?

1.8.1 Overview

To be brief; I am a 64 year old, Caucasian male[40], married with two children in their early thirties from a previous marriage. I am still on good speaking terms with my ex-wife who lives in England whilst I am based in Kuala Lumpur where I teach on undergraduate and post-graduate programmes for a local private University. I have also taught regularly on franchised programmes in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam.

I have worked for a large multi-national in a variety of marketing rôles at Country, Regional and Global levels on three different continents (Europe, the Americas and the Far East).   During that time, I have mainly worked in Travel and Transport (Sea Freight, Tour Operations, Travel Agencies, Road Freight and Road Express, Air Freight and latterly Air Express and International Mail), nearly always with a strong Global dimension.

I have had a direct reporting line to a variety of nationalities; Britons, an Indian, an Australian, a Dutchman, a Mexican, a Dane, one Malay, one Malaysian Chinese and two New Zealanders.   Nearly all of these have been a pleasure and an education [41] to work with. However, I did encounter the odd corporate psychopath (Morse, 2004) on the way.   Correspondingly, I have had an even wider range of nationalities in my

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[40] Hence I am researching in an area dominated by other older, white males. This could be viewed either as a strength (as an emic researcher who tacitly understands the culture) (Headland, 1990) or as a handicap (due to perceptual bias).   One remedy is to view the problem through the lenses of a variety of intellectual paradigms (Burton D. , 2009)

[41] I have kept my own list of the key things I have learned from each of them. In all cases they had at least one thing that they could teach me.

teams, in addition to the above I can count: Peruvians, New Zealanders, Croatians, Belgians, Italians, Germans, Greeks, Nigerians, North Americans, US Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Chileans, Colombians, Brazilians and Malaysian Tamils (Indians).

In my work, I have interacted with Europeans, Americans (North, South and Central) and Asians. I have also had some minimal experience in Africa but virtually none in the Middle East. At the last count I had visited and/or worked in some 80 different countries and territories.

1.8.2 Early Beginnings

I come from a middle class British family. My Mother is Scots (although, born in India where my Grandfather was working as a Doctor in the Colonial Service). My maternal Grandmother became ill and died in Fiji whilst my Grandfather was travelling around the Island of Mokani. He possessed the only drugs that may have saved her. My Father was from Devon and an Electrical Engineer (as were my Paternal Grandfather and my Uncle) who became interested in Marketing and ended up working in a marketing rôle for the Central Electricity Generating Board in the UK in the late 1970s. I was born in Edinburgh in the early 1950s and am therefore of the post-war Baby Boomer generation.

My parents divorced in the mid-sixties and I returned to Scotland with my Mother and Sister where I finished my secondary education. As a result of my Father changing jobs fairly frequently, I attended my first primary school in Cornwall, another primary school in Huddersfield yet another in Sheffield and then on to a Grammar School in Derbyshire.

Figure 1.14 Dore Village School c.1970

I finished my secondary education in Perthshire in Scotland.   So with 5 different schools in the space of 13 years, I got very used to changing environments and adapting to new situations and making new friends. This skill has stayed with me over the years and I think I have my childhood to thank for this.   As my Uncle Howard likes to describe the Dent family – "Here Today, Somewhere Else Tomorrow".

Theories on early childhood development suggest that frequent changing of schools introduces stress but if this is handled successfully then the individual is likely to become quite adaptable. The impact on personality is currently less well researched. Divorce in the mid-sixties in the UK was far less common than today and is also, of course, a major stressor in childhood development.

My Mother, who had trained as a Nurse before marrying was successful, after the divorce, in gaining a post as the Matron of a small cottage hospital in Perthshire where we lived comfortably.   Although money was tight, and it was not until my last year of High School that she was eventually able to afford a car.

Whilst at school in Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Perthshire I earned extra money as a Paperboy, as a Golf caddy, even singing in the village church choir in Dore, Sheffield

where I was remunerated in the case of weddings and funerals. In Scotland I worked in a Fish & Chip shop and then as a waiter in a hotel that specialised in Dinner/Dances. Later, when I was hitchhiking home from Perth, I was given a lift by the owner of a hotel 'up the Glen' that offered me a job as a barman. In these times, I learnt a number of things, how to handle dogs, why pedalling a bicycle through deep snow does not work and (to some extent) how to interact with people.

On turning 18, I left to return to England where I lived with my Father and Stepmother for a year or so before renting my own, rather squalid, bedsit in Kingston upon Thames.

I found my Stepmother exceptionally hard work, although bright, intelligent and very successful. I owe much of the eradication of my rough edges to her insistence on manners, decorum and etiquette[42]. She was kind and generous to those she loved and I was lucky enough for her to lend me her company car (for which she had no use) during the week whilst I attended College. She too, was from Scotland, from a poor family and had worked her way up the ladder with little formal education to a senior position as Head of HR in a large, publicly quoted, London based company.

Having bounced between Scotland and England three times, I found my identity to be somewhat confused. I spoke mainly Scots vernacular but with an English accent (and indeed to some extent still do). I had decided I was of Scots nationality on moving to Blairgowrie in Perthshire in 1966 – partly out of loyalty to my Mother but probably more pragmatically to avoid being picked upon in the playground. This was after all, the year that England won the World Cup, which did not go down well in Scotland.[43]

This identity crisis was to revisit me again in the late 1980s on which I will elucidate

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[42] It was indeed the premature removal of my table napkin whilst others were still eating that caused the final fracture between my Father/Stepmother, myself and my (now ex-)Wife.

[43] Jim McCalliog of Sheffield Wednesday scored the winning goal at Wembley the following year to cement a 3-2 victory for Scotland against England thus becoming the first team to beat the World Champions, and on their home ground to boot.

further upon in following Chapters.

1.9 Methodology

I have already alluded to the circular and recursive nature of certain types of management research (e.g. Deming, Lewin, Reason and Bradbury amongst many others), so it will come as no surprise to discover that I too, am in favour of this style of endeavour.   The methodology that I have chosen to adopt is that of Wong (2007), which is that of a case study applying an ethnographic reflection on my professional practice.   There are three distinct phases which I explain below, but Phase 1 does not simply feed into Phase 2, nor Phase 2 into Phase 3, rather they are all recursive.   That is to say that there is a constant revision of philosophical perspectives, data and reflections as a result of earlier reflections.

Phase 1, as already identified, is commenced with an inter-pretavistic perspective using a critical social theory approach.   Reason (1988) describes the first phase as a tentative holding phase whereby initial thoughts and premises are held sub-judice.   Phase 2 is based on the recall of my professional practitioner data, which recognises that my recall will be both faulty and itself, subject to my own re-interpretation, a view supported by Habermas (1987, p. 342) "experiential accounts or lived-experience descriptions (which) are never identical to the lived experience itself".   These data are then "interpreted" using a hermeneutic approach.

Nietzsche also recognised the dangers of retrospective analysis, whereby the individual episodes in time can be nicely packaged into a coherent plan to arrive at some distant objective on both a miraculous and wonderful way.   But he also recognises the importance of "how one becomes what one is" (Nietzsche F. , 2004, p. 34).   Although

I am clearly not Friedrich Nietzsche, I am going to allow myself the luxury of going against his recommendation and employ a similar methodology myself.

Phase 3 is the last stage, but as explained above, will only be reached after multiple reiterations of Phases 1 and 2. This phase applies a critically reflective approach to what has been termed a Meta-Matrix of data (Lavertu, 2007)
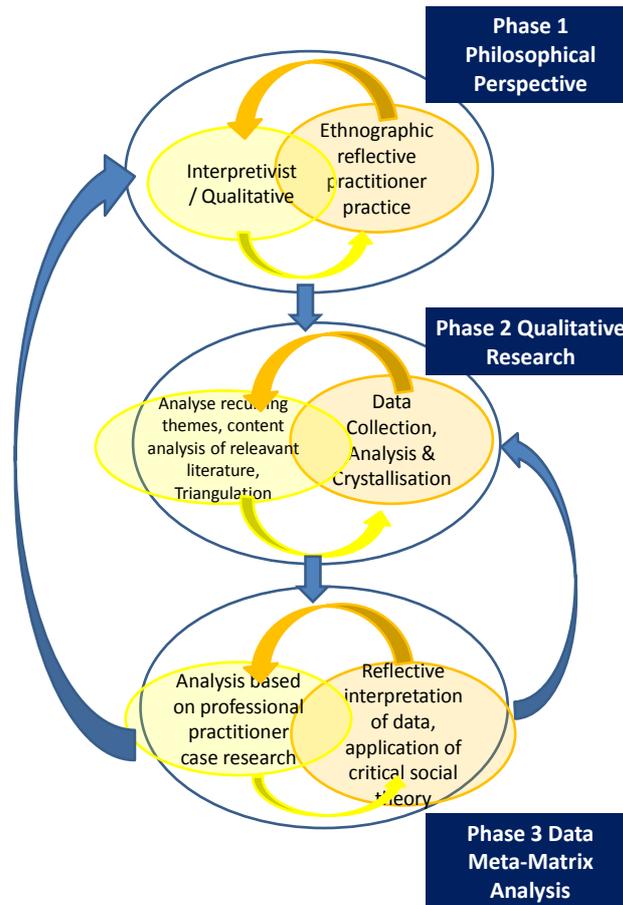
Figure 1.15   A Qualitative Case Study Methodology, employing Habermas's critical social theory perspective within a phenomenological, reflective practitioner approach. (adapted from Lavertu (2007).

This methodology employs heuristics applying both depth and breadth of reflections on my experiential material thus producing insights into the field of international marketing.   I feel that I have been consistent with my brand map, in which my espoused theory is mainly consistent with my lived theory (Jack Whitehead (1993) & (2009)), although I recognise that this has not always been the case.   Self-awareness is vital to the correct recognition and identification of the inconsistencies between espoused and lived theory (Noffke, 1997). My writing is within what Jack Whitehead calls the "Living Theory Paradigm", where he asserts that the use of the first person

singular ("I") is not only acceptable, but also recommended, encapsulating as it does the subjectivity of the paradigm. Enquiries of "How do I improve what I am doing" involves the clarification and evolution in the cycle of action reflection, action plans, data and subsequent reflection on the effectiveness of the actions and then evaluation. This is then followed by the modification of the action plan and the cycle continues (Whitehead J. , 2012).

Third person research is, by far and away, the most common modus operandi of academic literature, and aims to move from empirical observations to generalisable theory. Second person research is more concerned with the capability of an individual to competently investigate a particular field of inquiry (Reason & Marshall, 1987), (Reason & Torbert, 2001), (Reason & Bradbury, 2006). Action research is (typically) conducted in the first person and is concerned with how the individual researcher and the processes/project/organisation s/he is working with/for can improve their own modus operandi. This latter type of research can be characterised (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010) as either Upstream or Downstream. Upstream would examine assumptions, desires, intentions and life philosophy of the researcher. Downstream would inquire into actions and behaviour. Qualitative research can look into three dimensions of time; the past, the present and the future. In practice, much social science research focuses on the recent past, action research on the other hand builds on the past and suggests strategies for future action (Chandler & Torbert, 2003) I believe this to be one the fundamental functions of Economics (in its widest sense) – the requirement to make accurate predictions about the future and recommendations as to future strategy. I would like to think that Adam Smith, the founder of modern day Economics, but who considered himself primarily a Philosopher (Phillipson, 2010) would have approved of my *espirit systématique* which he associated with true philosophical thinking as opposed to the English method; "the English seem to have employed themselves

entirely in inventing, and to have disdained the more inglorious but not less useful labour of arranging and methodizing their discoveries, and of expressing them in the most simple and natural manner" (Smith, 1755).   I sometimes think that this is the cause of the current malaise in 21st century academic research and that there is still much to be learned from Adam Smith.

I have no intention of criticising the more traditional methods of deduction and induction, but the scientific community itself is now recognising that the pursuit of publications, new discoveries, lack of replication studies and the misuse of statistics and statistical over-fitting and tuning of data has led to some question marks over their efficacy (see for example Ioannidis (2005)).

The extent to which I reveal my inner self is necessarily limited, but even so, I have exposed many of my weaknesses, mistakes and prejudices to the reader with the intent to further validate the authenticity of my work.

Finally, I would like to re-iterate that the proof or disproof of hypotheses is not either my intention in this thesis, nor is it applicable to the field of heuristic research.

1.10 Contributions & Limitations

I have drawn upon a number of different disciplines in order to place my learning in context and to give you, the reader, a better understanding.   This approach integrates the many ways of knowing and understanding to more accurately perceive the inter-connectedness of life (Kegan, 2000) and the complexity of organisations and systems (Wadsworth, 2010).   Yet, I have strived not to follow an eclectic approach by merely cherry picking those theories which are particularly appealing to me. Rather I have tried to remain true to my chosen methodology of critical theory but without declining

assistance from other fields (notably post-modern marketing) where greater insight can be gained. Researchers who are multidisciplinary, adaptable, self-critical and tolerant of complexity tend to be better forecasters (Tetlock, 2006). When I was a junior Market Analyst at the Automobile Association (the AA) in the mid-1970s, we did something rather controversial and without any philosophical or rational underpinnings: We took the Economic forecasts from the NIESR, London Business School and the Cambridge group, added them up and then divided by three.

Some many years later Nate Silver's research into the Society of Professional Forecasters found that such crude averages were in fact about 20% more accurate than those of any one economist.[44]

However, I was asked on a number of occasions by the Manager of Corporate Planning at the AA to declare my allegiance for either Keynesianism or Monetarism (after Milton Friedman of the Chicago School), which in the late 1970s was a particularly topical and divisive debate amongst members of the Economics fraternity. Partly out of uncertainty and partly because I could see merit in both camps, I replied that I refused to commit myself to either. This is not as irascible as it may seem. Within the natural sciences there are two extant and contradictory theories – those of General Relativity and Quantum Theory. The recent successful identification of the Higgs Boson brings the two possibly closer together but a single Universal Theory remains hidden at this point of time.

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[44] (Silver, 2012, p. 197)

Reflection

Different perspectives, different tests and different conclusions from the same results *are* symptomatic of life in the 21st Century and indeed throughout time. If the woman we drown in the river is proven not to be a Witch (as she failed to float as we had predicted) then we have not disproved the existence of Witches – we have added to the body of evidence of a valid test for Witchcraft. Hence the ability to accept different interpretations and explanations is essential to the not just Critical Theory but to all science. Blind acceptance of the dominant paradigm is represented by the broad and straight road to Hell. Indeed, when I was at the AA, one of the front covers of one of our Spring Planning Conference papers, which I designed, showed a route map (as one may expect from the AA - as that was one of our most popular member requests) showing three possible routes; a broad, straight road, an almost hidden narrow path covered in briars and thorns and a heather bounded track heading into the hills.

I am fond of this analogy as I believe people are seduced by the easiest path – but may live to regret it. The nettle strewn stony path is that represented by religion – a hard way with an uncertain pay off, and the bonny, life loving, mountain people approach to life as represented by Elf land. Sadly I no longer have this piece of artwork which was drawn for me by a friend. The idea came to me from an English folk song by one of my favourite bands – Steeleye Span – Thomas the Rhymer.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h44ZIsB374c.

Thomas returned from fair elf land as a prophet – or in 21st Century parlance, an Economist. Although in terms of substance the difference between a Witch and an Economist, in my view, may seem minimal at best, Clark & Salaman (1996) would likely agree with me.

Figure 1.16   Thomas the Rhymer meets the Queen of Elves

From *Thomas the Rhymer* (retold by Mary MacGregor, 1908) "Under the Eildon tree Thomas met the lady," illustration by Katherine Cameron

Insight is all about understanding and better understanding enables better prediction. Better prediction of likely outcomes in any field of endeavour will lead to improved performance, which is what I seek.

This is a case study, hence, it is essentially a contribution of but one observation, yet the practitioner case study approach requires more additions to the (limited) bank of existing knowledge, or as Whitehead (1989) put it – "claims to knowledge may then be validated by groups of critical peers and thus, eventually contribute to the dynamic pool of living theory".   More cases enables greater scope for cross case analysis and comparison and the investigation of specific phenomena in different settings (Yin, 2003).   I have described my philosophical position earlier in this chapter as being with a subjective epistemology but objective ontology.   This is key to the validity of case research as one's epistemology depends on one's ontology and vice versa.   This inconsistency leads to a metaphysical contradiction (Chatterjee, 2013) as ontology,

epistemology and methodology do constrain each other. Hence, case studies can provide neither sufficient nor necessary support of causal relationships.

Utilising an ethnographic approach the researcher strives for phenomenological validity such that the analysis provides a way to understand the mode of behaviour regardless of whether the researcher is working with texts or documents, rural Fijians in island villages, financial analysts in New York or Paris or cosmopolitan intellectuals in Vietnam (Toren & de Pina-Cabral, 2009).[45]

Becoming a proficient reflective and reflexive practitioner requires adopting a life-long learner approach to work, career, family, health and social interactions. All of these domains overlap and interact with one another. The language of English is also of import. The thesis explores the philosophical conceptualisation of business and how it is experienced from an emic perspective, in this way it possibly provides a fuller understanding of language in the business context. As I explain later in Chapter 3 the theory of epistemology now accepts the idea of "memes" – or knowledge which was specific to one individual but could be communicated to others (Dawkins R. , 1976) (Moritz, 1990). Memetics focuses on the development of knowledge by means of social processes. But rather than knowledge being the product of these processes, it positions a social system as something developed by the sharing of knowledge processes. In this way, a social group can be defined by those members all sharing the same meme (Heylighen, 1992). I would suggest that one of the extant failings of marketing is to fall into this trap without the fuller understanding of the underlying precepts, assumptions and models of contemporary thought, this again is a fundamental tenet of this thesis.

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[45] This adds no validity to my thesis whatsoever. But I can record that my Mother was brought up in Fiji, my Sister worked in Paris, I have stood at the top of the World Trade Centre in New York and I now teach in Vietnam.

Fundamentally, the process of action, critical self-reflection and writing empowers the writer as a thinker and hence more capable of superior analysis and action in the future. The results produce insights both for future international businessmen and also researchers and teachers in the field of business administration.

My contribution may be small but it is (hopefully) a worthwhile addition to this nexus of action research.

I have sought advice, critical feedback and new ideas from many friends, colleagues and other sources, any errors or omissions which remain are, of course, my responsibility.

1.11 Structure of the Thesis

In this section I provide an overview of the structure of the thesis with some explanations of the contents of each chapter.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the research problem and my approach to it. I discuss in some detail what it is that I wish to improve and various methods for measuring my progress. I give in insight into my family background and commence the critical reflection process. I detail my philosophical position within the environs of Critical Theory and then give some background to the development of the theory of continuous improvement commencing with Deming and also discussing Lewin's Action Research feedback loop and Reason & Bradbury's work on the heuristically reflexive practitioner approach. I conclude with some observations on the actual revealed benefits of the critically reflective cycle.

Chapter 2 is a long chapter reviewing the literature which I consider relevant. As is normal in action research it is not possible to determine which literature is relevant *a priori* and much is only discovered *en-route*. I commence with how epistemology

impacts on my research, the drawbacks and circularities involved and then move on to discuss how the concept of warranted knowledge can help deal with some of these issues.

The next section (2.2) is also theoretical, building the foundations for that which is to follow. It focuses on the work of Habermas on Critical Theory and then moves on to discuss how relevant it is to Management Research. This theme is continued in Section 2.3 with a deeper analysis of the detail of Critical theory and how Philosophy has developed over time both in the East and the West.

Section 2.4 looks at my own identity and how I can apply critical theory to my career and finally in the conclusion reveals my true purpose which is to voice and put on record my thoughts on social justice. This might be termed "the Socratic project of creating a better world through the use of liberating human reasoning" (Wong E. S., 2012, p. 6).

The last section of my literature review gives a detailed account of the theory of the reflective practitioner and the case study approach. It then applies two marketing tools (the Brand Map and the 5C Analysis) to the author to help identify potential areas for development.

Chapter 3 contains my published papers on which this thesis is based. I am the first named author for all five articles which were written by me with input and guidance from my Supervisors Professor Nazari bin Ismail and Dr. Edward Wong Sek Khin. To an extent much of the material contained in these papers is repeated in some of the chapters which follow. Some of the material has also been discarded as part of the reflective cycle described in my methodology section.

Chapter 4 is less theoretical and more applied, relating events and then reflecting on how this fits with my current understanding, whether I need to review my past actions and then further consider what other options may have been preferable. This last chapter provides an overview of the insights which I have gained whilst writing and reflecting on my written papers. I then attempt to move on from the specific to more general but also more fundamental issues which may have been hidden from view. I describe a phenomenon of inter-connectedness, which in today's increasingly global economy, I foresee becoming more prevalent in the future. The backdrop for this analysis is my movements across the Globe in various marketing rôles. I conclude with some reflections on past dreams which reveal a sense of fear and a drive for achievement which provide a deeper understanding of motivations at the time.

I conclude in Chapters 4 & 5 with a final twist in the spiral of continuous reflection. I consider the impact that a few critical events can have on one's career. I move on to also consider both Luck and Religion and the place they take in determining how to improve one's professional practice.

Appendix A details a shadowing exercise conducted by a London Business School MBA student on myself in the latter part of my DHL career. Appendix B contains a Case Study written by the author on the acquisition of Airborne Express by DHL. The Afterword is a personal statement on the process and efficacy of the PhD process.

1.12 Reflections

**Non, rien de rien
Non, je ne regrette rien**

Édith Piaf 1915-1963

Reading any autobiography the reader may be entreated to "learn from the Author's mistakes". (See for example Terry Curran (Regrets of a Football Maverick, 2012) amongst many others).[46] Alternatively, the author, less frequently, may claim "Je ne Regrette rien" possibly with less plausibility.   But even so, regretting nothing is not quite the same as maintaining that no mistakes were ever made.   The key learning point from Deming's Circles, Kurt Lewin's change processes and the spiral of Action Research is that, in order to improve it is necessary to clearly identify mistakes made and more importantly to learn from them.   More pragmatically it is important to identify and code the mistakes made and enumerate the frequency of each type.   By code, I mean categorise the mistake into groups (financial, interpersonal, factual etc.).   Only by doing this is it possible to self-analyse where the major weaknesses in your portfolio lie.

It is not possible to progress relying only on a line manager, colleague or partner to point them out for you because, as Johari's window[47] points out, that person cannot have access to all the information relating to you.   S/he may well be able to identify some mistakes and development areas that you were not aware of but unless you are completely open (almost a psychological impossibility) then a candid view of your own weaknesses is dependent on your own critical analysis.

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[46] I should probably confess my allegiance at this point to Sheffield Wednesday which was coincident with Wednesday's FA cup final defeat and the separation of my parents in 1966.

[47] q.v.
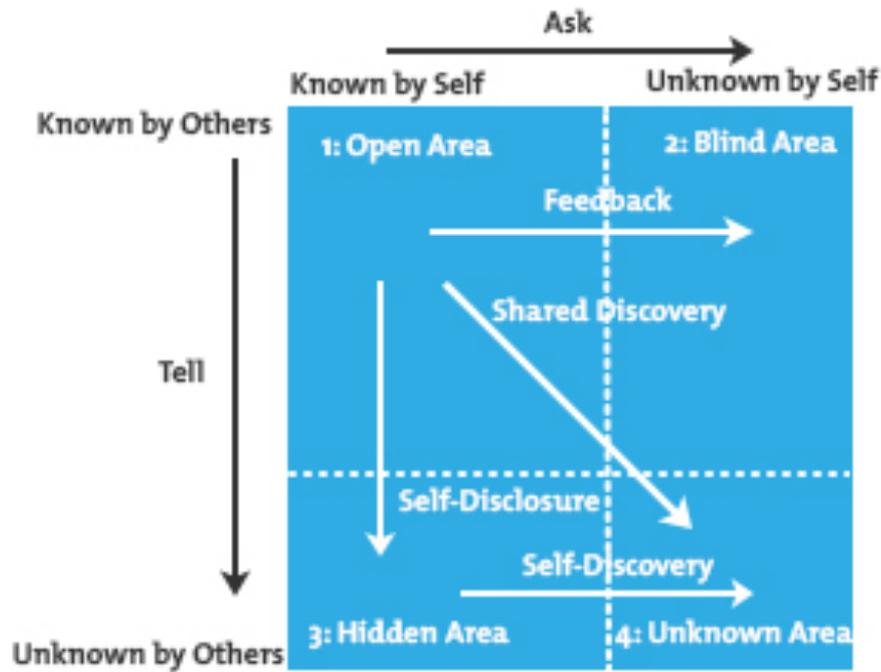
Figure 1.17   The "Johari Window"   [48]

Robert Burns referred to what is the Blind Area as a giftie - a small gift. "Oh wad some power the giftie gie us, to see oursels as other see us."[49].

So on reflection, I now realise, a fortiori, that a list of one's mistakes is a very valuable tool.   Frequent re-visitation and consideration of current problems may then help the avoidance of a similar mistake.   Applying the Johari window over a long time period has a difficulty which is that my direct line manager changed with great frequency.   The longest I had was for about three years and on one occasion the person that recruited me had already left by the time that I started my new appointment.   Despite this handicap, reflection does permit "Self-Discovery" in addition to the more regular "Shared Discovery" at the time of the annual appraisal.   I will refer again to the Johari window

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[48] The Johari Window is taken from the names of Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham, who developed the model in 1955 (Luft, 1969)

[49] To A Louse, On Seeing One on a Lady's Bonnet at Church" 1786.

in the closing chapters.   But if I may, I would like to add an Eastern perspective which I feel perhaps works more accurately as a metaphor and that is of the Balinese mirror. This mirror (usually beautifully carved as is the wont of the Balinese craftsman) has two wooden shutters, where both reveal clues as to what lies behind but with little overall coherence.   One shutter can be opened to reveal half of the picture, whilst the other remains closed, even so the gestalt is now more easily conjectured and with further effort the remaining shutter can be successively nudged further and further but never completely open.   I feel certain that this is a concept which is both helpful to you dear reader, and would also have proven a rich vein of art for René Magritte[50].   It provides a metaphor for the differing layers of reflection as I delve deeper into my professional practice.

Figure 1.18   mmd in the Balinese Johari Window

I mentioned earlier in this chapter that I now see myself astride two professions: that of a Marketeer and that of an Academic.   The rôle of an academic can be divided into that

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[50] René Magritte, (1898 - 1967) one of my favourite surrealist artists and like me a past resident of Schaerbeek in Brussels.

of Teacher and that of Researcher. What exactly a Teacher is, depends upon one's values, beliefs and intentions and more specifically there can be no neutral ground from which to understand another person's teaching (Pratt, 1992). On reflection, I can see that my dominant or preferred conception of teaching is "Developmental" (applying the Collins & Pratt (2011) typology) but also with a strong dose of Social Reform. Collins & Pratt found that most (50%) respondents identified "Nurturing" as their dominant domain, which is evident in my behaviour but not dominant. Apprenticeship may be seen as more appropriate for technical skills teaching and is not necessarily key for me at the present time. Transmission was very important to me in my early days of teaching at Basingstoke Technical College, where I now recognise that I was overly obsessed with covering all of the syllabus with little concern for whether this was what my Students either wanted or needed.

I think the Developmental domain actually overlaps with the concern for the individual which perhaps harks back to my time as a trained Assessor at DHL. And I can recognise that this is something that I am genuinely interested in and perhaps explains my success in team building. More recent academic thinking might position this as somewhat akin to Servant Leadership.

I can offer one vignette in support of this:

I had a young lady working in my Pricing team who was offered a job in Head office in Germany. There were many difficulties and in the end the job fell through. I felt it was my rôle to ensure that it did not and managed to finally engineer the hoped for transfer.

Sometime later I had another very intelligent young woman working as my Marketing Planning Manager in one rôle that I had in DHL. She was invited to fill in for a similar position in China for a short period – to which I quickly agreed as I saw this as a great

opportunity for her and valuable experience for our department. She completed the assignment very well to the extent that an offer to a more senior position in China was soon forthcoming. I was loathe to lose her but I also saw this as an excellent developmental rôle for her and once again quickly agreed. To which my line manager asked how I intended to cover her loss in the forthcoming planning round? I replied that if she resigned and went to another company we would have to cope anyway. But this way she would feel more valued by the organisation and more likely to return (as my possible successor) in times to come. My boss was not impressed and imposed an embargo on the move.

I felt this as an affront to my leadership position and a waste of a good talent (who otherwise may well have just left the company) and through various machinations ensured that the international transfer went through. This did me no favours with my manager, but (I believe) gained me higher loyalty from my team.

Shortly afterwards, another member of my Pricing team was asked to fill in for a maternity cover position in Australia. This was something that the incumbent was extremely keen on – but his hopes were completely dashed by a ukase by the Country Manager against the move. In this instance I was unable to help him achieve his developmental move and had to council him as to the (limited) benefits of staying put. I felt this as a personal failure.

Reflection: This failure and antipathy to a Manager who could not see how he was scotching[51] the hopes of young talent in our organization was merely my own immaturity and lack of emotional intelligence.   I could empathise without difficulty with members of my team. But I failed to recognise the fear of being left without key members of staff in Quarterly review meetings with the Regional COO which was the concern of my Country Manager. If I had developed my relationship with him to a higher level I would have been well aware of this.

But why has Social Reform elevated itself up my hierarchy to the number two slot when Collins & Pratt found it almost insignificant (3%)?   I would refer back to my Objective which is to communicate my experiences as a Global Marketeer.   And now that I *do* think about it, I *do* want to influence the future behaviour of my Students and hence (hopefully) change Society. This is indeed consistent with Action Research

> **At the time I was not aware of the work of Daniel Goleman and the concept of Emotional Intelligence. I now realise that I have strengths in this area – but also big weaknesses. By tuning into the concerns and priorities of Senior Management I could have been far more effective in my management and leadership rôles.**
>
> *Insight*

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[51] I could not help using this verb which essentially means to spoil someone's plans and entered the English language at about the same time as the word Welch. Both terms were used in a derogatory context about England's troublesome neighbours but have now entered the common lexicon.

which is designed to promote *action* in a field.   This action has an impact on people which has both political and moral implications and therefore, is of direct interest to policy makers (Feldman, 2003)

I do have strong views on certain things, Politics for sure, but I do try conscientiously to not succumb to the temptation to peddle my beliefs to my Students (although, I recognise that it is almost impossible to totally eradicate this predilection (Shweder & LeVine, 1984). On slightly safer ground, I have always been interested in transport (the Automobile Association, train spotting on Doncaster railway station with Michael Palin, hitch hiking back home to Scotland from London at the end of term etc.) and this was reinforced to me by Professor Michael Beesley at London Business School who enthralled me with his work on the value of Travel Time, The Hong Kong Mass Transit Authority and The London White Taxi Cab Association.   As a result, I am very supportive of the idea of trains and trams (as were my Father and Uncle Howard) mainly because of their efficiency, safety and environmental benefits.   Similarly, I am an active proponent of Cycling (and indeed walking – although neither are popular pastimes in Malaysia) and hence integrated transport solutions.

As I have mentioned before, I am interested in driving and riding and continuous improvement in this area, my interest in cycling is more linked to my interest in travel and physical fitness.   I have cycled across England, down through France to the Mediterranean, across the Alps and also from London through the Mountains of Holland and across the Afsluijts Dijk. As a result, I am passionate about transportation, the environment and the societal benefits of green logistics.

The ways in which I attempt to inculcate my students with these views is primarily through assessments and Socratic questioning[52].   I do recognise that this is indirect influencing but I feel no guilt as I consider this a noble objective.   I also now can see that what I see as noble, may be perceived by others as both undesirable and ill-considered course material.   But supporting me are Reed & Anthony (1992) who regard Management educators who perpetuate morally impoverished philosophies as contemptible.

Regardless of this, I feel that this is a legitimate mission with sound moral and ethical underpinnings which requires communication to any audience who is interested or concerned, a position which Ulrich (2000) when he talks of the value of reflective practice in civil society would (I trust) agree with me on.   Ulrich also points out that having an idealistic perspective is insufficient and that the correct epistemological, ethical and questioning tools need to be applied.   At the idealistic level, this could be said to be based on my pursuit of the Aristotlean ideal of 'eudaimoni' (completeness or happiness, q.v.), the Kantian kingdom of ends (Kant, 1785) or on a slightly more practical level - similar to the Deming (1986) and Argyris (1964) and their concept of respect for the individual.   The examples I have given above could be said to mainly relate to green logistics but I have other issues on which I claim a voice, notably ethics in organisations, the societal cost/benefits of Marketing, cultural considerations in international business etc.

The Sheffield Wednesday connection is partly chance and partly psychological crutch.[53] Neither my Father nor any of my family had any interest in football.   I only discovered the game in 1966 and indeed the first team I watched play was Sheffield United. I later

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[52] The LBS Shadowing project in Appendix A identifies this as one of my characteristics.

[53] Team identification is defined as "the extent to which a fan feels a psychological connection to a particular team" (Wann & Branscombe, 1993)

watched the FA Cup Final in 1966 on my neighbour's brand new colour television[54] and the tragedy of Wednesday going Two-Nil up in the second half and still somehow managing to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory and lose 2-3, thus, becoming the first team in history to lose in the Cup final after being two goals ahead.   The World Cup was an added bonus, I was able to meet many of the West German players who were based in Sheffield (Beckenbauer, Tilkowski et al) - I had ambitions to be a goal keeper at age 14 - and also train (well stand in goal – whilst the shots whistled by me) with the Swiss national team.   Moving to Scotland was another testing time. I have no recollection of being afraid, concerned or worried about the move.   The impact on my Sister was greater I fear, and for my Mother it was a last chance saloon jump to safer ground.

The impact of this level of stress may lead to Post-traumatic growth which can be accompanied by an increase in well-being, but distress and growth may also coexist. (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 1998).   For me this was the first of a number of such shocks…

My address was Matron's Cottage, Strathmore Hospital, Blairgowrie, Perthshire, Scotland.   And from there, I penned a letter to Jim McCalliog (scorer of Scotland's winning goal versus England at Wembley in 1967).[55]   To my surprise he wrote back – probably assuming that I was in traction or worse.   I was delighted by his reply and like so many football fans once infected, the disease (like my Grandfather's malaria) stays with you for life.

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[54] Contemporaries assure me that this was not possible as colour TV did not come in until a year later.   I am uncertain as to whether I was watching some kind of closed circuit transmission or my memory is deceiving me.

[55] A fellow countryman playing for the team was found to relatively important in the reasons given for supporting a particular team (Kerr & Emery, 2011)

Figure 1.19   One of the two wards at Strathmore Hospital in Blairgowrie.

So why did I invest time and emotional capital on a sport which my upbringing and heritage had no interest? I suspect I was clinging on to a stability zone in a world where all was uncertain.   Moving from one country to another,[56] a different education system and all without one's Father is not a mission to be undertaken lightly.   The stability zones identified by Alvin Toffler (1972) were People, Places, Things, Ideas and Organisations. I have always tended to reduce these to socially related stability zones; namely Work, Family and Social friends.   And for many years I have advised any of my direct report's, who have asked, to endeavour to preserve some element of separation and continuity in two of them before making a change in the third. My move to Scotland encapsulated all three; Work (aka School), Family and Social (having to make new friends).   In order to curry favour with potential new friends is it any surprise that I attached myself to the Sheffield Scot who had put the "auld enemy" to the sword at Wembley? Additionally, I am throwing out a message in a bottle to other

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[56] Similarly association with a home town or country was found to be an important emotional driver of identification with a Sports team (Kerr A. , 2009) (Greenwood, Kanters, & Casper, 2006)

Wednesday fans that I can identify and possibly form future positive social interactions with. (Wann & Schrader, 1996). [57] [58].   This is clearly what Toffler referred to when discussing Organizations – identifying one's self with a favourite Club.[59]   I could have chosen religion (especially given my links to the Church Choir and my Mother's links with the (Derbyshire) tradition of Well Dressing), but this held no great interest for me.

On reflection, I realise that Places and Things are also very important to me. I cannot take places with me, but photography to capture memories is a strong driver for me as is the history of my family.   My ex-wife was always puzzled by my need to revisit houses that I have previously lived in, perhaps I just want to check that they are still there or that I did not imagine them?   Objects (Coffee Cups, T-shirt's, my Bicycles etc.) all provide quite vivid memories of where I was when I acquired them, who I was with and what I was doing at the time.   If I lose one of these possessions I become quite upset – even although the replacement cost of the object is low.   To give but one example, one day whilst driving to the South West of England with my (now ex-) wife we stopped off at a small pottery and bought a set of 4 beautifully fine wine goblets.   Over the years one became chipped, one developed a crack and one was dropped.   Eventually after some thirty years one was left.   I walked back into the kitchen (it was dark at the time) and placed it carefully onto the work counter where it toppled over as a result of being placed on top of a slender power lead for a telephone charger.   It broke into about

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[57] Which has in eventuality proved to be of significant value to me.

[58] Strangely enough, I had an encounter with a fellow Wednesday fan who now lives in Thailand in February 2014 where we discovered that we had both played in the same London Owls Cricket team in the 1980s and I had (in)famously lost us the match by hitting our wicketkeeper in the face with a fast ball (which the batsman had wisely avoided). Two overs earlier I had, apparently, broken a wooden spine of the wicket keeper's leg pads. One of our player's wives had to drive our injured Captain to Guy's Hospital for stitches in their 3 day old car and was rewarded with blood all over the passenger seat.   We lost the match despite being in easy reach of the total as we had thus run out of batsmen (having only had 10 players to start with).

[59] The importance of the identification with a team becomes a component part of an individual's own personal self-identity (Murrell & Dietz, 1992).   Hence team affiliation becomes a sub-component of my own brand map which I will elucidate further upon in later chapters.

seven pieces, despite a standing start and only a few centimetres fall.   I was distraught and still feel a sense of overwhelming loss, even now, as I think about it.   Not rational. But this is who I am.   Freud would term this *objektbesetzung* (or cathexis in English).

At the beginning of this chapter I describe one of my direct superiors who had a strong penchant for Machiavelli, he was one of the three most difficult people I have ever worked with (it is probable that he viewed me the same way) we were bitter rivals and

On further reflection, I can now see that photographs, objects and locations are powerful stimulants to my memory, I believe, far more so than for other people. I can often recall in great detail past events when I see an object associated with that time, whilst up until that point the event had been long forgotten.

Insight

when it came to the day when the Marketing Director position became vacant he was successful and I was not.   Then followed a few days of palpable fear as I was certain that my career in the company was both metaphorically and literally over.   I did take preventative steps, speaking to both the outgoing Marketing Director and the Managing Director and three days later on a Friday night my rival approached me to say that my job was safe.   My actions had probably saved my career at that point.   I was later told that the Managing Director thought that I was an essential counterpoint to the new Marketing Director's possibly 'risky' approach.   Looking at the negative side this could be construed as meaning that I had not

been seen as adventurous or challenging enough for the rôle.

I have also mentioned the Indian Prince that I worked for. One of his favourite sayings about teamwork was that he did not want to be riding down into the Valley of Death and having to check behind him to see if his army was still behind him. I mention this as Machiavelli[60] would turn in his grave at how I missed my next opportunity for advancement.

I was called into the Director's office (i.e. my erstwhile rival) and asked for my opinion on firing one of his senior Sales managers. I agreed quite readily with his logic (in terms of performance) but pointed out that the Sales Manager's familial relationship within the company (to an individual far higher in the Corporate hierarchy than the Country Manager) would cause him serious problems. To this day, I still do not know exactly why I did this. From a game theory perspective I should have

Being true to my held moral stance therefore seems to be of paramount importance to me, rather than capitalising on Gift Horses. There is no doubt in my mind that a more "relaxed and flexible" attitude to such shibboleths would have aided my career. But to my mind this is no improvement to my professional practice. My Brand Map has this characteristic "hard coded" into the core values. It may serve, however, to make me both happier and also more authentic as a leader.

Insight

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[60] Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527), author of The Prince, a treatise on how leaders actually lead. Nowadays the term has acquired negative connotations of underhand diplomacy, deception and ambition untrammelled by any moral constraints.

encouraged him in his endeavour and then stood back to reap the rewards.

On deeper reflection I think there was some kind of professional consultant inside me that overcame the opportunistic careerist.   This characteristic of authenticity by which I see what I am doing with a high level of self-awareness was much debated by Jean-Paul Sartre, Heidegger and Adorno (Taylor C. , 1995). Not a good move by me by any measure, but again, strangely, not one that I regret. To return to the Bhagavad Gita this seems an unlikely triumph for detachment over selfishness. Curious…

Kant might have approved, as he viewed any action motivated by self interest as highly suspect but those actions motivated by a sense of duty as 'unconditionally good'.

More fundamentally am I Scots or English or neither?   Nietzsche might describe me as a doppelgänger with two maybe even three faces.   Scots, English & European.   I perhaps might even qualify for four as I actually see myself as Global (Nietzsche F. , 2004, p. 106).   I like to portray myself as Scots (even now) but, in reality I left the country at age 18 and have barely been back there since except on the odd occasion.   I am passionate about the current Scottish Independence debate, and I can see some direct implications for myself.   I actively try to divorce my own (selfish) preferences against the common weal (q.v.) and only consider the economic and political and philosophical arguments. Regardless of the result (at the time of writing mid- September 2014) I can have no impact on the result as I am not resident in Scotland and hence have no vote.

I am clearly British but now see myself as more of a ('good') global citizen.   National Identity is a strange thing; I would not pass Norman Tebbit's cricket test[61] as an Englishman, and indeed now living in Malaysia and listening to various Tamils talking about allegiance to India rather than Malaysia, I realise that culture and identity trumps national credentials.   And yet the Tamils themselves reject their supposed national of language of Hindi and hence India now finds that its de facto national language is English. My problem is that both my culture and national credentials are a mess.   Even more regrettably, I am betrayed by my own accent which is more Yorkshire than Scots with a smattering of Home Counties and the odd loan word from the United States, Dutch expletives and Manglish[62] expressions. This despite the fact that my Sister (who has lived in all the same places as I have (up until I reached the age of 18 when I re-joined my Father in London) has a clear Scots, Perthshire accent. If I were to have further children they might be further confused as my wife is half Black American/Jamaican and half Filipino with a Palestinian/Iraqi Step-Father, a Filipino/Swedish half-brother plus a Palestinian/Filipino half-sister & two half-brothers.

Some religions propose a system of continuous re-incarnation – moving from a base level thru intermediate levels of consciousness and understanding to ultimately higher levels and potentially final awakening.   Coupled with this Eastern philosophy is the wheel of life, the Yin/Yang cycle and belief that to become a Master one must also become a learner again.   The Black belt of Karate Master will through time and numerous wash cycles begin to fray, fade and gradually become white once again. In a

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[61] Norman Tebbit was a member of the Conservative Government and subsequently Chairman of the Conservative party in the UK during the 1980s.   The 'Cricket Test' was a hypothetical question to be asked of second generation immigrants as to whether they would support England in a Test match or the country of their parents or grandparents.

[62] Manglish is a combination of English and Malaysian.

sense this illustrates the circular nature of this thesis, from a Student, to a Practitioner, to a Master and back to a Learner.[63]

Figure 1.20 The Black Belt of my Karate Sensei; Lee Chee Keong (7th Dan)[64]

But to take this back to Edith Piaf – it is not so much having no regrets as realising that what is past is past and there is no virtue in agonising about it.   What one can do is consider how one might handle a similar situation in the future.   This epitomised in the Gibbs reflective cycle (Gibbs, 1988) which culminates in the "Action Plan" – if this situation arose again what would you do?   This strikes me as a very worthwhile addition to the Deming cycle or indeed typical action research heuristic.   The aim of this thesis is to enable the reader to make their own generalisable conclusions which can enrich their own professional practice.   This has been termed 'relatability' where you, gentle reader, can identify the degree of relatedness on whether knowledge gained from one context is relevant to, or applicable for other context, or the same context in another time frame   (Dzakiria, 2012, p. 46).

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[63] The Six Sigma approach of statistical quality control utilised by General Electric also uses the Black Belt metaphor, trained practitioners moved around the organisation offering enlightenment to their Green Belt acolytes.

[64] I have subsequently discovered that Master Lee was once offered an honorary 8th Dan, but as the price for this award was US$1,000 he declined.

1.13 Conclusions

The purpose of this Chapter was to give the reader an overview of the subject matter, an introduction to the research problem (i.e. How do I improve my professional practice?). I discuss both the contributions and limitations of the research and provide an outline of the thesis structure.

I conclude that Self Reflection, if applied correctly, can enable one to empower oneself to be able to deal with future complex problems in a more efficacious manner. It is most probably in this technique rather than the specific cases discussed that my major academic contribution lies. Nonetheless there may be some important lessons for future practitioners to consider. My academic colleagues may find my reflective technique applied to a brand map of interest, also my views on employee/organisation loyalty which I think merits further research. Similarly the "Gently" (see Chapter 4) phenomenon that I detect to be increasing in both frequency and magnitude may be worthy of further research. The process of articulating my thoughts has undoubtedly made a difference to how I perceive myself. This has allowed me to re-prioritise my Goals, focus on improving aspects of my behaviour that provide the biggest incremental benefits in comparison to inputs and sharpen my intellectual thinking. With luck, this has also made me a more effective communicator and hence, able to promulgate the art of critical reflection to my Students in the future. As Saren et al (Critical Marketing:Defining the Field, 2007) put it: being critical is the *raison d'être* for all academics.

Chapter 2, my literature review, is intended to build on background and methodology provided in Chapter 1 by explaining the importance of epistemology to management research. More fundamentally it explains why it is important to my chosen

methodology and why I devote time in Chapter 1 to discussing my philosophical position.   It endeavours to provide an overview of the main epistemological debates in social science and tries to show that these epistemological debates lead to different ways of undertaking management and organizational research.

Chapter 3 contains the published papers on which this thesis is based.   As these are original documents the page numbering reflects that of the journals and not of the thesis. I try to link all five papers into a comprehensive whole by means of my introductory and concluding chapters.

CHAPTER 2   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Prologue

This lengthy chapter examines the literature relating to my published papers which is necessarily broad ranging.   I commence in section 2.1 with a review of the key literature for this thesis which thus concentrates on Critical Theory, Action Research and Living Theory.   I continue with a discussion of epistemology in section 2.2, I then set out my theoretical underpinnings and move on to discuss Action Research and Critical Theory, focusing particularly on the work of Jürgen Habermas in Section 2.3. moves on to look at the historical antecedents of critical theory from both a Western and Eastern philosophical perspective.   The last two sections (2.5 and 2.6) of my literature review examine theory relating to my methodology and different techniques for evaluating professional practice.

2.1 Key Literature

This section is intended to cover only that literature which is of key import to my published papers and this thesis and is thus necessarily written some time after the bulk of the thesis was composed.   This is due to much of an action research thesis requiring a continuous search for relevant literature as opposed to a traditional thesis where the literature survey would need to be completed not only before data are collected but also well before the methodology is defined.   The wide ranging literature covered in sections 2.1 to 2.5 reflect the process by which I actually determined which literature was relevant whereas that contained in section 2.1 is to rapidly enable the reader to identify the links to my reflections in Chapters 4 and 5.

My stance utilises an interpretive approach where reality is only given meaning by understanding social interactions and the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckman, 1967) or multiple realities (Twining, 2000). Hence, understanding may not depend upon the revelation of some hitherto unknown scientific truth but rather on human behaviour, the situational context and thus some generalisations. As Crotty (1998, p. 9) put it "meaning is not discovered but constructed". The foundation for this perspective is phenomenology and the work of Edmund Husserl (1913). Phenomenological analysis is not based on a scientific perspective but an empirical and descriptive one. This is because any perspective must always be directed with some objective in mind. As a result, consciousness can, in reality, cloud the issue.

Unconsciousness on the other hand (be it dreams, metaphors or language) may reveal more of the hidden truth. Our body has a paradoxical quality in that it is simultaneously the platform of perception as well as an object perceived by others. So by making a conscious decision to locate oneself in a particular place the perspective necessarily changes (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

Interpretive social science theory describes and interprets how many people conduct their daily lives. It contains concepts and limited generalisations, but does not dramatically depart from the experience and inner reality of the people being studied. (Neuman, 2000). The term for the study of interpretation is called Hermeneutics after the Greek God Hermes who was the messenger of the Gods[65]. Socrates (in common with most Greek thinking at the time) regarded words as a vehicle for ambiguity and possibly dishonesty and trickery (Couzen-Hoy, 1981). Given Marketing's low and

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[65] The son of Zeus and the Goddess Maia. Hermes was known as Mercury in Roman times.

disreputable status (see, inter alia; Brown (2006)[66] and Sheth & Sisodia (2006)), it may be that he is the rightful true patron Saint (or God) of the art of Marketing.

I am essentially a case study of one (Yin, 2003) whereby I aim to interpret to gain insight which can be used to build up a framework from which theory can evolve. Hermeneutics originally was concerned with ancient religious texts and hence designed to give meaning to the unfamiliar and alien (Moustakas, 1990). Whilst the reader may not consider marketing to be especially "alien", post modernism does not seem to adequately take into account the shifting structures of capitalism (Morgan, 2003). Indeed some writers regard post modernism to be but the cultural arm of multinational capitalism (Stephanson, 1989). The popular protests in Wall Street and London in 2012 following a deep global recession perhaps reflect not so much "alien" as "alienation". For myself I see Post-modernism in Marketing as providing a useful tool for critique (Brownlie, 2006) and with no pretence of offering solutions, as such it is a worthy ally to that of critical realism and my own thesis. In particular it has opened the door to new approaches to methodology (e.g. semiotics, phenomenology, reflexivity, ethnography etc.) and new sources of insight (e.g. novels, movies, plays etc.) (Brown S. , 2006, pp. 222-223).

Hermeneutics is seen as akin to the concept of abduction (Eco, 1990) and abduction or hermeneutics has one major advantage over the more traditional methods of induction or deduction, which is that of understanding. Deduction can be seen as a rather sterile statement of facts with no explanation. Induction can be criticised as a leap from an observation to a theory with little understanding of the overall context. Abduction involves a deeper level of analysis and can be more relevant to case study analyses.

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[66] "It is disdained by senior managers, who feel that marketing is failing to deliver on its much-trumpeted transformational promises. It is disdained, at least implicitly, by academicians who are talking to themselves rather than communicating with key constituents like practitioners and policy makers. The inevitable upshot of this near universal loathing is that marketing is losing touch with its markets…"

Abduction can be seen as endeavouring to capture the methods of both the hypothetico-deductive and inductive approaches by simultaneously utilising pattern recognition with the acceptance of possibly valid theories worthy of empirical verification. However, there needs to be a recognition of the fact that all facts are in fact value and theory laden (Hanson, 1958).

Within the social sciences the potential reaction of individuals to analysis (possibly during reflection) is known as the double hermeneutic theory (Giddens, 1987). I will go on in later chapters to explain how I see hermeneutics (or abduction) as a key competence of a professional marketeer as it contributes to the bank of tacit knowledge which enables superior performance.

2.1.1 Critical Theory

If I have to select a starting point for the philosophical theories on which my thesis is based I would not start with either Greek or Eastern philosophy, rather the work of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). The antecedents I will cover in later sections. Kant introduced the concept of 'judgement' and I will draw on this and his moral philosophy. Husserl (1859-1938) was the first of modern philosophers to question what we perceive and how this is shaped by our own consciousness, this he termed 'Phenomenology'. His protégé Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) was the author of *Sein und Zeit* (or Being and Time) and the concept of *Dasein* which relates to 'being' in a both a place and a time. (Heidegger, 1962).

Heidegger along with Kierkegaard (1813-1855) and Nietzsche are regarded as in the vanguard of a movement called existentialism, which is was subsequently popularised by the work of Camus (1913-1960) and Sartre (1905-1980). My own position in this thesis is that of an existentialist.

Reviewing the literature of the phenomenology of action, Pacherie (2008), identifies how unexpected results produce deeper learning and a sharpened sense of self. My many examples of unexpected or unwanted results are designed to produce a sharper and more effective self.

I have stated my objective as to communicate how I improve my professional practice and in my current role this is most likely to be through the channels of management education (either andragogy or written papers). Critical theory has looked at management education and found it lacking. This is primarily because education is a significant part of the means by which social values are imparted Reynolds (1997), (1998) & (2000). Furthermore issues of power and diversity are also subject to organizational pressure to conform.

Critical theory bears similarities to Post-modernism, but focusses more on issues of politics and power. It is especially concerned with values and knowledge (Horkheimer, 1989). It also rejects positivism which relies on the concept of a theory neutral language.

Critical theory was developed from the work of Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse at the so called Frankfurt school (Alvesson & Wilmott, 1988). Habermas (a later member of the school) is renowned for his revitalisation of the critical theory paradigm (Pusey, 1987). I will refer to the works of Habermas (1971, 1972, 1976, 1984 & 1987) in depth in later sections.

Critical theory has been adapted in the field of management research by authors such as Forrester (1983, 1989, 1991, 1992 and 1993), Harvey(1990), Sayer (1992) Parker (1995), Willmott (1995), Alvesson & Deetz (1996) and Kincheloe & McLaren (1998) inter alia.

2.1.2 Action Research

The technique that I apply is that of Action Research; this is the theory of how through a continuous cycle of action, assessment, reflection and subsequent amended action, a process, system or organization can be steadily improved (Schön, 1983) based on earlier work with Argyris (1978). The initial concept was developed by Kurt Lewin (1946) utilising his theories of group dynamics and field theory. He describes it as a series of steps in a spiral which is strikingly similar to the ideas of Kaizen and continuous improvement as put forward by Deming (1986) at about the same time (most of Deming's work in this area was conducted in the immediate post war aftermath in Japan). The spiral has been described as a 'virtuous spiral' by Bob Dick (2002). The use of rich pictures (symbols, cartoons, photographs etc.) has also been adopted by action research following the work of Checkland & Scholes (1990), Hicks (1991) and Williams (1998).

Action research and self-improvement has been further developed in more recent years by Reason & Torbert (2001), Reason & Bradbury (2006), Reason (2006), Reason & Marshall (1987) and Wadsworth (2005), (2008) and (2010). First person action research is examined by Coghlan & Brannick (2010) as either downstream (actions and behaviour) or upstream (assumptions, desires, intentions and life philosophy).

Phronesis is an Aristotelian concept of practical wisdom but with moral overtones. It is thus seen by Elkland (2008) as the heart of action research. Certainly existential ethics in action research is an important dimension as Coghlan (2013) identified, and it is also central to this thesis.

2.1.3 Living Theory

The specific action research methodology that I follow is that of the "Living Theory Paradigm" (Whitehead, 2000, McNiff and Whitehead, 2002 and Wong E. S., 2003, 2004). This paradigm utilises a number of different cycles of reflection and the deeper levels of reflection termed by Moon (2004, p. 97) as critical reflection, perspective transformation or reflexivity.

The concept of the Living Theory is:

> *"A living theory is an explanation produced by an individual for their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formation in which they live and work." (Whitehead, 2012).*

This view is echoed by Leitch and Day (2000) who believe that the role of emotion needs to be recognized in understanding and developing one's capability in self-reflection. This concept of emotional insight (Moon, 2004) is similar to that of Mezirow (1981) who called it "affective reflexivity," and more recently, Lloyd (2010) used the term "affective reflection".

There is a strong link between Critical Theory, Action Research and Living Theory as I hope I have demonstrated. To strengthen the validity of an explanation in Living Theory research four questions derived from Habermas's (1976) four criteria of social validity can be used: i) How can I improve the comprehensibility of my explanation? ii) How can I strengthen the evidence I use to justify my assertions? iii) How can I extend and deepen my socio-historical and sociocultural understandings of their influences on my practice and writings? iv) How can I enhance the authenticity of my explanations to show that I am truly committed to the values I claim to hold? (Whitehead & Huxtable, 2016 (forthcoming)).

As living theory requires (typically) both a wide and deep research remit it tends to be populated to a large extent by both Master's and Doctoral students. Whilst this research can be subsequently enhanced, honed and extended it cannot, ipso facto, be repeated or replicated. Recent dissertations/theses in this area include; Charles, (2007), Spiro (2008), Jones (2008), Van Tuyl (2010), Huxtable (2012) and Demirbag (2014). These cover a wide range of topics from Ubuntu (the concept of humanity in relation to society) and Engineering to Education in Hawai'i. To my knowledge there are none in the field of global marketing.

2.2. Epistemology

This short section[67] aims to provide some basic knowledge on how the understanding of epistemology can help a researcher to appreciate that behind every action lies certain epistemological commitments which the researcher may not be aware of. These commitments in turn can directly or indirectly shape research behaviour and the direction of research into management studies. The fundamental assumption is that whatever actions we take in our life are primarily driven by our worldview. Our worldview may consciously or unconsciously shape our behaviour, but in most cases researchers do not realise this. In most cases, people do not actually realize their own worldview as they are so used to doing things their way, that it does not really matter to them what their worldview is. Our worldview is directly based on our "vorhabe" (Heidegger, 1962) as previously discussed in Chapter 1.

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[67] Some elements of this section have been published in 'Actual Problems of Economics', Dent. M., Wong Sek Khin E., bin Ismail M.N. (2012), Action Research and critical theoretic approaches to management studies. No.4 (130) pp366-371.

I consider the assumptions of epistemology to be essential to the understanding of my research methodology in general and to the field of action research and the paradigm of the living thesis in particular.   I give some brief overview of the history of epistemology and the latest thinking before moving on to describe the different types of knowledge.   Truth transpires to be but a chimera and warranted knowledge stands in its stead as the most useful concept we can rely upon.   However, the most important conclusion, revealed in my reflections, is the value of tacit knowledge.   I conclude that tacit knowledge is of far greater value than explicated knowledge and yet by both Academia in general and Marketeers specifically it is much underestimated.   The observation that this type of knowledge is much undervalued was made by Schön (1987) many years ago.

2.2.1 What is Epistemology?

Epistemology is the study that involves challenging and reflecting on presupposed conventions and deeply rooted beliefs for the greater purpose of seeking true knowledge.   The word epistemology is derived from two Greek words – "episteme" and "logos".   The two words put together mean "knowledge about knowledge".   This chapter further discusses epistemological commitments, the circularity of epistemology and the scepticism of epistemology.

People perceive things differently. Human beings themselves determine what is right or wrong, true or false and real or unreal. As a result, different people will have different viewpoints, thus there can be no absolute conceptions.   This is common in social research and sometimes more serious than in the natural sciences because the constructs used in social science are generally quite intangible (Satisfaction, Loyalty, Performance

etc.) and hence different interpretations are possible. A researcher's school of thought will also impact on their perception and cognition.

In the past few (nearly three) decades, social research has been subjected to much criticism regarding unscientific research design. This has caused management research to move towards a more "scientific" research design. This change is reflected in the newer terminologies and methodologies now being used in social research. Sometimes the language seems more abstract and advanced and hence, has limited intellectual and philosophical discussion. In a broader perspective, research is conducted for the wellbeing of human society. Therefore, research should be carried out in a scientific and systematic way to get accurate results, which should be interpreted in an understandable manner.

Epistemology provides a solid, scientific and theoretical approach to performing research in a more systematic way. Researchers are the main contributor for the body of knowledge, which ought to have a high level of pre-understanding of epistemology. As Utilitarianism explains "good is whatever brings happiness to the majority" and actions (behaviour) determines the outcomes. Relativism states that mainly culture and historical experiences shape behaviour and understanding. However, behaviour is an outcome of thoughts and is internally motivated and justified. Thus, ontological assumptions or pre-understanding about the context is essential to develop and conceptualise what is knowledge (Wong, Ying, & Fui, 2012)

Basically, epistemology determines knowledge in a scientific way and it carries a far broader meaning. Simply, it allows us to know what causes and what does not cause certain outcomes. Theoretical and methodological foundations for establishing scientific knowledge normally begins with normative standards, which differentiates what is right. Thus, epistemology itself has different viewpoints. Rorty (1979) viewed

epistemology as a discipline which helps to perceive, evaluate and make comments on all other disciplines.   Therefore, other disciplines (both Science and non-Science) are based on epistemology and epistemology provides guidelines, framework and structure to figure out what knowledge (theory) can be tested.   Habermas (1972) describes "pragmatic epistemological realism" which is designed to some problems encountered in epistemology.   The approach combines empirical arguments with practical actions to obtain more realistic interpretations.

2.2.2 The Assumptions of Epistemology

I commence this section with some definitions and explanations of what exactly Epistemology is and is not.   This is no easy task as the question of what is knowledge has been debated for thousands of years and indeed, is still being debated.

The standard definition of knowledge is 'justified true belief' as illustrated in Plato's *Theaetetus*. It is clear that a mere belief is not sufficient, I may passionately believe in Santa Claus but that would not classify as knowledge.   Justification is linked to the concept of reason but reason is itself built on beliefs.   These beliefs are basic and sometimes called derived beliefs, these are derived from, inter alia, Parents, Television, Teachers, Contemporaries etc.   Yet all of these sources are dependent on their own perceptions of the world and as Kant (Casullo, 2002) has shown our perceptions are inextricably linked to our prior beliefs.   There is also the issue of Truth; if someone serendipitously correctly guesses the right facts but these are based on justified but false assumptions – the so called 'Gettier Paradox' (Gettier, 1963) could this reasonably by termed a true belief ?

"Cogito ergo Sum", I think therefore I am, this was the basis of how Descartes built his world view (Greco & Sosa, 1999).   The accepted criticism of this approach is the use of

self-evidence as the basis of the justified beliefs.   This does cast doubt as to how solid something that is stated to be "self-evident" actually is.   Indeed, this illustrates the very overlap between Epistemology and Ontology, the latter being concerned with what existence actually is and the reality of being and how we can differentiate between what is real and what is not.

2.2.2.1 Realism & Scepticism

The period of the Enlightenment (i.e. the 17th Century) was a time where there was a great surge in music, art and scientific knowledge. As more 'facts' were discovered and the human store of knowledge increased the assumption was that the human race would advance towards a state of higher and higher knowledge and wisdom as the few remaining mysteries of the universe were unveiled.   The idea that there is a real world out there which is not dependent on human observation (and indeed why only human observation) which merely awaits discovery, is termed ontological or metaphysical realism.   But even at that time, philosophers such as Locke recognised that certainty about such things as past events was virtually impossible and hence conclusions (knowledge) based on these facts were therefore also questionable.   By the 18th Century, David Hume (the Scottish philosopher) believed that knowledge had its roots in imagination and the passions and the use of intellectual powers based on habit, custom, education etc. and that reason is essentially unphilosophical, or as he rather controversially put it "Reason is, and ought to be the slave of passions" (Hume, 1978).

One of the strengths of realism is the acceptance of the fact that one can always be wrong, (Gey, 1999) although sceptics may argue that realism is perhaps too ready to approve authoritative claims of authenticity (Code, What can she know ?: Feminist Theory and the construction of knowledge., 1991) & (1993).

Similarly one of the weaknesses of realism is that it seems to be dependent on the perspective taken. If one is normal, then this is not an issue. We can take knowledge as emotion free, value free and objective. The problem is that the definition of normal is unfortunately ascribed to the winners in life, in other words those in some position of power in life, hence the positions of Blacks, Women and Gays are disqualified as they are not regarded as normal (Braidotti, 1994).

Scepticism questions the validity of epistemology, and has existed since the dawn of philosophy itself. Scepticism can be represented as a continuum between mild and extreme; anti-dogmatism simply questions whether infallible and certain knowledge is possible. Cognitive scepticism is more focused on whether knowledge can ever be gained simply from one's own senses. Semantic scepticism questions the capability of language to adequately reflect reality in any meaningful way. And ontological scepticism questions whether there is an objective realism at all.

Following the Renaissance, the two main epistemological positions were; empiricism, which sees knowledge as the product of sensory perception, and rationalism which sees it as the product of rational reflection.

All of these aspects of scepticism are augmented by post-modernist and critical theorists who can point to the failures of the Enlightenment utopian ideal. To conclude, the question is whether one is of a Realist or Sceptic persuasion. As ever in Philosophy, the answer is (for most) still sub-judice.

2.2.2.2 Types of Knowledge.

Kant identified two different types of knowledge, 'a priori' and 'a posteriori'. A posteriori knowledge is gained from experience whilst a priori is based on fundamental

beliefs.   As an example of a priori knowledge, we have beliefs about the number of dimensions and the history of the universe.   Unfortunately, even these are no longer supported by mainstream scientific thought where we can now see that both time and space are interrelated[68].   Kant also distinguished between analytical truths – which relate more to language and definitions – and synthetic truths which may themselves be based on a priori knowledge.   Nowadays, all true knowledge is regarded as synthetic and subject to empirical justification (and possibly revision or even refutation).   Hence reason may be an arbiter of the truth but it is not sufficient.

2.2.2.3 Truth

It is generally assumed that we know and can test empirically what is true, yet this is not as simple as it may seem.   How can we assert something is true without comparing the statement or theory to reality?   Aristotle defined truth as "to say of what it is, that it is of, or of what it is not, that it is not" (Haack, 1993) and this is indeed how the majority of people would understand the term.   This is known as the correspondence theory which describes a statement or theory as true if it corresponds with reality.   This definition of truth therefore, depends on semantics (Lepore & Smith, 2006), this means that the correspondence theory of truth relies on meaning which can be accurately represented by language and that language is thus, a picture of the facts and the mind is a mirror (cf. Reason & Bradbury) in which the world is reflected.   So the correspondence theory is isomorphic in treating two different things, that is, language and the world as being the same thing (Segal, 2006).

This becomes even more complex when we consider what we mean by 'meaning'. Quine (1961) uses a holistic theory of meaning whereby, no word stands on its own but

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[68] Professor Brian Cox recently accepted that the idea of multiple universes makes more sense than that of a single universe. http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-29328983, September 24th 2014.

depends on other words within the sentence and sentences depend for their meaning on the sentences surrounding it and only the face the 'tribunal of experience'. The complexity deepens when we consider the difference between the surface meaning of sentences and the underlying structure, Saussure (Jackson, 1995) terms this semiotics – although the term was first introduced into the English language by John Locke. If we had what has been termed 'an ideal speech situation' this would require participants to have the same capacities of discourse and social equality, we could then invoke the consensus theory of truth in which the truth is what would be agreed upon in an ideal speech situation. Only once we have achieved the ideal speech situation where communicative distortions are eliminated are we able to assess the validity of particular claims to truth in open and honest debate. It is apparent from the theory of the indeterminacy of language that this is not possible between different cultures as many words are not directly translatable. I see this clearly in Malaysia where many scientific terms are impossible to directly translate from English into Malay. And this indeterminacy of language is true for French, German, Mandarin and indeed all other languages. Similarly the language of commerce has interpretations which may appear opaque to the non-cognoscenti.

To see words as not necessarily possessing their apparent meaning sounds in itself a word game, this may seem somewhat abstract and possibly even childish and this is indeed how Wittgenstein described it- 'language games', with the meaning of words evolving as we experience how others use those words (Wittgenstein, 2001).

Utilising a rational consensus which is derived from different sources untainted by force, coercion, distortion or duplicity could (in theory) provide a valid basis of knowledge – this is known as the consensus theory of truth. Apart from the obvious difficulties in obtaining such a consensus we are also faced with the problem that even

this "truth" is only valid at any one particular time as the consensus is frequently only temporary (Parker M. , 1995).   This is a point also made by Nelson Goodman, total and permanent credibility might be indistinguishable from truth – but most credible statements often turn out to be false (Goodman, 1978).   Incidentally, Goodman also rejects the idea of any statement being capable of being proved either true or false without imposing some frame of reference.   Hence correspondence with reality merely translates into correspondence with *a* reality.

Hence, from the philosophy of Mill, William James and Nietzsche came the idea that an infinite number of explanations of "knowledge" exist and this has come to be known as the Pragmatist's view[69].   Nietzsche went even further and viewed "knowledge" as merely propaganda in favour of the human race in preference to other species.

On a more prosaic level the case for truth is questioned by Davidson (1990) who identifies the issues with the definition of truth.   Moving forward it is possible to cling to the deflationary version of truth – but this in reality merely to repeats the proposition – which leads us no forward at all.

So, if indeed truth is something outside of language then we require a perspective to view this from, this could be the view from 'nowhere' (Nagel, 1986), the God's eye point of view (Putnam, 1981) or the 'Archimedean' point (Rorty, 1991) Given that this cannot be achieved we, necessarily have to revert back to some coherent account of truth, a.k.a. warranted knowledge.

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[69] See the diagram "Figure 1 Reflexivity & Management Research" for one possible perspective of the position of Pragmatism vis a vis Critical Theory.

2.2.2.4 Epistemological Update

Even if epistemology is based on assumptions the question of our pre-understanding still arises and this will influence how we determine whether something is true or false.

Since epistemology has encountered so many issues Johnson & Duberley (2003) suggest using self-comprehension; where criticisms of our own understanding and impact assessment within a social and natural context are more realistic. Furthermore, they proposed challenging pre-supposed knowledge to explore alternative possibilities that will broaden thinking. Everyone has their own moral obligations and judgements to differentiate what is right and wrong (I will discuss my own position relative to religion in the final chapter) and such arguments help to assess social and natural contexts. Based on this, epistemology permits pre-suppositions with direct observation (though interpretation of observation is also shaped by individual perception). Epistemology helps to clarify the origin, nature, limitations and gaps in existing knowledge whilst identifying what is scientific practice and how we use this to solve fundamental gaps that exist.

As mistakes are unavoidable, the acceptance theory of knowledge is based on 'peer review'. Epistemological relativism explains that the truth is always relative to some form of reference. Hence, mistakes such as misunderstanding the significance of data and methodological issues are common in social research. These can be corrected through improvements in training, recruitment and selection of scientists. (Wong, Ying, & Fui, 2012)

As I have illustrated above, the epistemological debates among scientists and philosophers dates back to the time of Plato and Aristotle. It is the historical foundation for scientific knowledge which provides a standard methodological and theoretical framework to evaluate knowledge by specifying what is acceptable. So the

question then arises – is a theory of epistemology possible – a science of science? Quine (1969) originally suggested that epistemology should be a branch of experimental psychology as it enables understanding of the laws of cognition in explaining why and how theories are articulated. However, Quine (1970) himself later saw this as a mistake as it would confine epistemology to the field of psychology rather than within philosophy and saw this as a problem of circularity.

Circularity occurs because of the absence of an incontestable foundation from which other theories can emerge, resulting in various competing philosophical assumptions about knowledge when dealing with management and organisations. Hence, the best manner to proceed with research from an epistemological is to be reflective by observing and contesting our own presupposed conventions while exploring alternative epistemological commitments. In summary, every person has something in mind that helps decide which knowledge is warranted and reliable. This forms the foundation to making scientific claims.

Another shortcoming of this approach is that our perceptions are subjective and they cannot form an exact science. This circularity prevents epistemology in providing a reliable and secure foundation for scientific knowledge. However, knowledge is based on the ways we view phenomena around our self and it cannot be differentiated from a person's beliefs. So, while we are faced with this circularity we cannot evaluate science by using science.

2.2.3 Warranted Knowledge

Warranted knowledge is a set of epistemological commitments which provide us with criteria to discriminate between reliable and unreliable knowledge. It does not depend on truth but relies on what is also sometimes termed 'warranted assertibility' to provide

a pragmatic or normative defence of objectivity (Frega, 2013).   Warranted knowledge also goes back to Socrates and Plato, the term used in *Theaetetus* was 'account', but has the same meaning as warrant or justification.   Belief becomes knowledge if we have good and sufficient reasons to believe that it is.   Everyone holds some theory (principles or standards) about what constitutes warranted knowledge, if we do not have such a theory we will be unable to prove legitimate claims about;

a) What we think we know

b) What we think we have experienced.

Therefore these commitments provide us with criteria to assess the appropriate explanation and description of the social and natural world.   We can warrant being scientific:

a)   If the errors and mistakes are corrected through the improvement in the training, recruitment and selection of scientists.

b)   By supervision of scientific findings from a wider community of scientists

Hence, science will progress and its outputs can be trusted as we get it through objective observational processes encoded into its methodology and self-regulation.

Summarising the above arguments, it is clear that knowledge is based on what we experience and what we mean by true and false.   Science is not merely an outcome of intuition but also rational thinking and hence no such thing as value-free knowledge is possible.   Furthermore, epistemology seems to tally with ancient philosophies such as Buddhism.   Buddhism mainly explains the cause and effect relationships which cannot be escaped.   Epistemology on the other hand approaches the same relationships in a more scientific and systematic way.   By some way of conclusion, I will also consider religious conceptions of knowledge and my relationship to them in my final chapter.

2.2.4 Tacit Knowledge

There are two types of a knowledge that an employee may possess; tacit and reflexive. There is no clear, broadly accepted definition of tacit knowledge (Toom, 2012).   The theory of tacit knowledge was introduced by Michael Polanyi and in essence his theory was that "we can know more than we can tell" (Polanyi, 2003) (first published in 1958). This, however, raises further questions relating to how do we know tacit knowledge actually exists if no one can explicate it nor if there is any evidence of its application and finally how can we say what has been learned if once again it cannot be clearly explicated (Argyris & Schön, 1982).   If we were to accept this latter premise then qualitative improvements in (or as I would term them 'updents') are not possible.   To make tacit knowledge more widely available, Rorty (1989) emphasises the importance of 'vocabularies' which are attuned to the lived meanings.   Through my own narrative or case study I am contributing to this vocabulary.

Ryle also distinguished between different types of tacit knowledge which he describes as knowledge 'How to' and knowledge of 'That' (Ryle, 1949).   Tacit knowledge therefore seems to include a variety of meanings, including competence, skill, ability and know how, all of these are related but drawing a clear mark of delineation has yet to be achieved.

Tacit knowledge is an implicit understanding which is clearly understood by the practitioner but is more difficult to explain to someone without experience. Knowledge is seen as an instrument or tool and that is why it is called 'tacit'.   Hence, tacit knowledge is akin to the ideas of skill or competence.   As an example of tacit knowledge, I can explain how to ride a bicycle, possibly adding in detailed explanations of static and dynamic stability, possibly augmented with some insightful diagrams or

videos. However, no matter how well I explain this, it is unlikely that anyone would be immediately successful in riding a bicycle as a result of my theoretical instruction. This is an example of tacit knowledge, something that one person possesses but is not easy to communicate or disseminate. This is important in organisations as knowledge needs to transfer from one group to another through time but many organisations pay insufficient attention to this. The skill (or tacit knowledge) of the scientist is a fundamental input into the way that research is conducted in Polyani's opinion (1983), and this too is central to the assumptions of critical theory. Kuhn (1970) acknowledged that Polyani was correct in that any paradigm need not have a clearly pre-defined rubric in order to be either successful or scientific.

Tacit knowledge seems to relate to professional skill and expertise and this "silent", practical knowledge provides a confidence in action (Molander, 1992) & (Johannessen, 1992). I do confess that in my latter years in DHL UK I was very confident in my ability which I can now ascribe to four main factors:

> Firstly, certain rare events (which occurred maybe every two to five years) which I had experience of whilst others around me did not and I was able to make good decisions based on that knowledge.

> Secondly, in cases where the solution to a problem was unclear I had an extensive international network of colleagues (friends) who I knew well that could help me. This I frequently called upon. I reciprocated with assistance to others thus building up credits for the future.

> Thirdly (and this comes close to confidence in action a.k.a. arrogance) I realised that my analysis and conclusions were unlikely to be questioned by any of my direct superiors as my in depth subject knowledge was greater than theirs'.

Lastly (and this goes back to the advice I was given at Wings Holidays) I did make mistakes – but my team would inevitably cover for me and ensure that they were quickly rectified. I went out of my way to ensure that I provided help to them, mainly in terms of career advancement, but also boyfriend/marital problems, illness etc.

Tacit knowledge within organisations has been discussed as a feature of business where it is seen as a commonly shared knowledge within a company or specialisation (Insch, McIntyre, & Dawley, 2008). The sources of tacit knowledge spring from experience, possibly as an apprentice and results in how one is able to do certain things. My own objective – to improve my professional practice is encapsulated in an article by Argyris & Schön (1982), which examines a person's theories in use and espoused theories. Theories in use refer to what we think we do (and actually do) and espoused theories (or values) which are what we promulgate to others as to what we do. The two are often not the same, which may create tension. Goffee & Jones have a leadership theory which relates to this – it is only by being true to one's self and honest in communications with one's followers that it is possible to achieve "Authentic" Leadership (Goffee & Jones, 2006). They also refer to the importance of skill, which I see as coming from practice, critical reflection[70] and striving for continuous improvement. These are all attributes that I strongly identify with[71].

I used to play Chess for a club in Basingstoke in England in the mid-1970s. We were never very good and despite doing well in the local league in both Divisions 3 and 2 the minute we were promoted to Division 1 we soon became cannon fodder. I did learn that the first 10 moves were critical and mistakes at this stage of the game ultimately proved

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[70] The aim of critical reflection is to create doubt and critique of ongoing actions (van Manen, 1995).

[71] The LBS Shadowing Project in Appendix A makes note of the level of authenticity that I displayed in the work environment.

terminal. I began to build up a repertoire of moves which were relatively safe and brought with them some chance of success. As I improved, I realised that later on in the game no situation was ever exactly the same as in previous games but that there were patterns which suggested that such and such a move was likely to prove auspicious. "The familiar situation functions as a precedent, or a metaphor, or... an exemplar for the unfamiliar one". (Schön D. A., 1983, p. 138).   And this is how tacit knowledge operates in my view, taking lessons from the familiar and applying them to new situations. The lesson was well learned but unfortunately for me we were still rapidly dispatched back to Basingstoke Chess League Division 2.

A concept closely akin to Tacit Knowledge is that of Fluid Intelligence this is the ability to inductively process existing knowledge and apply it to new and unfamiliar situations. The outputs are of higher order thinking resulting in insights and synthesis (Gurubathan, 2005). Fluid intelligence can be distinguished from Crystallized Intelligence (which is merely the retrieval, recall and routine acquisition of prior content (Cattell, 1963)). Fluid Intelligence is also associated with "Far Transfer" which is the ability to apply conceptual learning in a variety of seemingly unrelated contexts (Salomon & Perkins, 1989); Far Transfer involves metacognitions or reflective thinking. My particular challenge (at the age of 63 coming on 28) is that Fluid Intelligence is said to be highly vulnerable to ageing (Lee, Lyoo, Kim, Jang, & Lee, 2005), whereas Crystallized intelligence can always be revised or relearned. This is because Fluid Intelligence is process based. So how can I, as a Life Long learner, avoid or circumnavigate this curse invoked by Old Father Time?   I will return to this issue in later sections.

The second type of knowledge is **reflexive** which relates to examining those issues which are important to the constituency that they are meant to serve (Shankar, 2009).

This could be referred to as Stakeholder theory – but fundamentally permits the questioning of the question itself as well as any underlying assumptions if necessary.

As Rawls in his 'Theory of Justice' identified it is impossible to throw off one's cultural and sociological viewpoints unless one becomes a temporary amnesiac (Rawls, 1971). Even amnesia may not be sufficient, because the most fundamental of our most basic precepts are not universally shared Dworkin (2011, p. 167) and hence views as to what is just or unjust differ, and thus, a consensus becomes impossible.

Argyris & Schön (1978) might term this as double loop learning where the objective is not merely to improve the strategy to achieve a given objective, but also to look at other governing variables which may also need to be controlled. This is in contrast to Single loop learning in which an actor will change his strategy for a particular event but has not transferred the knowledge gained to other situations. The diagram below refers to what Argyris & Schön term as the governing variable, but in practice this means goals, assumptions, and values etc., so in other words any "understanding" or objective that may require reassessment.
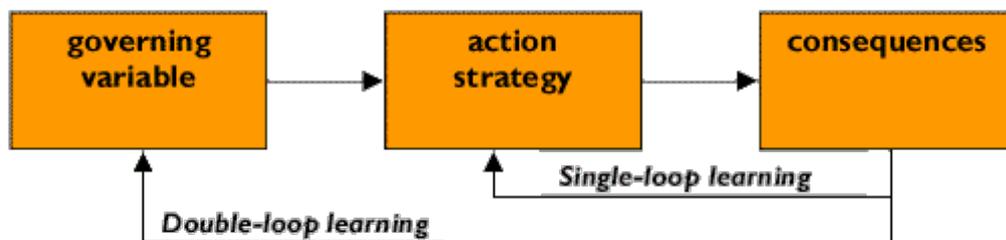
Figure 2.1   Single & Double Loop Learning

There is a third, a more fundamental re-examination of one's purpose and self-awareness Torbert (1972), and Bateson (2000) refers to this as third order learning. Hence triple loop learning goes back to square one to reassess the very basic principles

and paradigms that have governed both understanding and research, these are existential questions (Torbert & Fisher, 1992). To reach this level, the results are emergent as a result, more fundamental to an individual's raison d'être and thus potentially more sustainable (Taylor M. , 2011). Through a continuous process of single, double and triple loop learning as shown in the diagram in Chapter 1 I plan to arrive at a better existential level of enlightenment and empowerment.

There is also a hidden input to tacit knowledge which directly impacts on attitudes, values and expectations and that is company socialisation programmes (such as TQM, HRD etc.) which endeavour to inculcate universalistic values which prepare employees for practical moral tensions that occur in corporate life (Leavitt, Reynolds, Barnes, Schilpzand, & Hannah, 2010). This has been referred to as Cultural Doping (Wilmott, 1993) & (Legge, 1995) and bears many similarities to Eileen Barker's work on brainwashing (1984) that I have referred to earlier.

2.2.5 Life Long Learning

I make many references in this thesis to learning from mistakes and the value of tacit knowledge. The connection between the two has been recognised within management literature for many years. The implications of the changing nature of employment also impact greatly on this concept. Charles Handy published a book 'The Empty Raincoat' in 1993 (Handy, 2011); this had a seminal impact on me and which, I think, strongly influenced my career planning at the time. The title was taken from a bronze statue by Judith Shea called 'Empty Words' that he saw in a park in Minneapolis. His metaphor, was that we were not intended to be empty raincoats, numbers on a payroll system, or mere cogs in the big (red) machine. He identified the decreasing probability that one person would work for the entire duration of his/her life with the

same employer. Furthermore, there was an increasing probability that many workers would in fact have two, three or more different income streams in the 21st Century. To me, as an ex-employee of the Automobile Association (which with its Military connections and history dating back to 1905 and an organisation where people literally only left before retirement if they died[72]) this sounded very unlikely but also somewhat intoxicating. As we know Handy has been proven increasingly correct within this regard. Many other authors have taken up this theme, see for example: Careers as lifelong learning. The changing nature of work c.f. Hall & Mirvis (1995) and Kotter (1995).

I now attempt to combine teaching (terrible salary but great job satisfaction) with Consultancy (great money but hard work) with Flight Instruction (terrible money but great fun). This is all an attempt to achieve the fabled life/work balance. As ever the ideal is not easy to achieve. I did, however, plan my overall career strategy back in the early 1980s.

One recurring theme is that of self-reinvention. This is nicely encapsulated in a case study that I have on occasion taught, that of Madonna[73]. Similarly, a fellow alumnus of mine wrote a book entitled 'Tolstoy's Bicycle' in which he detailed how many people have learned new skills later in life to enrich both their experience and expertise. Tolstoy (apparently only learned how to ride a bicycle at the age of nearly 70. I try to incorporate the lessons from both Madonna and Tolstoy and attempt to learn a new skill every 3 years or so. I am currently trying to emulate my Aunt Evelyn and Uncle Bob by

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[72] Gordon Ronan was an excellent statistician, ex forces and great help to me, he died shortly before retirement. Iain Diffin helped me with Companies House research some time after I left the AA. I felt slightly guilty that I had not returned the micro-fiches he had lent me and surprised that he had not complained about my tardiness. I found out on my next return to my old office some months later that he had been killed in a car crash on a journey back home to Scotland. Barry Moss was a charismatic ex-colleague of mine who joined the AA about the same time as myself (1970) but died in 2013, still with the same company.

[73] Madonna – Two Decades of Succesful Personality Marketing, Case Code:MKTA021 (2005)

learning the Violin; my wife and my music teacher will attest to my perseverance, if not the actual resulting sound quality.

I would like to think that I have taken on the board the lessons from Handy and Kotter; learning from mistakes, reinvention and self-reflection.

2.2.6 Reflections

I now realise that tacit knowledge is of far more import than qualifications, explicated knowledge, past achievements, honours or awards or even experience per se. Tacit knowledge is the necessary competence or capability to satisfactorily deal with future events in a particular field. By definition, it is not something that can be taught but has to come from the combination of intellectual understanding and comprehension and practical experience. This is interesting because Marketing has always striven for academic recognition (cf. the drive for a royal charter to award the title 'Chartered Marketer' by the Institute of Marketing in the UK). Similarly, the term 'marketer' is preferred by the CIM to that of 'marketeer', the latter sounding far too much like a 'seat of the pants' salesman rather than a true professional. This drive for academic credentials may be misplaced and it may be that the gut feel of the marketeer is what truly makes him or her successful. Napoleon Bonaparte would apparently have agreed with me, as when considering an officer for promotion he reputedly dismissed reports of his heroism and bravery and enquired – "but is he lucky?" He saw luck not as evidence of chance favouring an individual but as something specifically attributable to an individual. A lucky general would succeed despite adverse conditions whereas a well-qualified general may fail even when the odds seemingly favoured him.

I have already alluded to the academic marketing fraternity's focus on quantification, SPSS, Structural Equation Modelling and statistical tests, possibly to the exclusion of

more important issues. When conducting a post mortem on a particular failed marketing initiative (which once again in my experience is a fairly brief discussion at best) most of the emphasis has been on the data and on aspects of project control. Similarly failed military initiatives will focus on logistics and command issues. Yet much research has shown that it was the fundamental *initial assumptions* that provided the fault lines for what followed (somewhat similar to my Chess analogy above). So what are these assumptions? In Military terms, they would relate to what the enemy is going to do next and in order to do this one has to have a good understanding of why the enemy might do that, i.e. a full comprehension of his assumptions, motivations, objectives etc. In marketing terms this relates to the understanding of the Customer or more specifically the Customer's future wants and needs. Indeed my Indian boss (who was also very fond of military analogies) would frequently tell me when I asked him about some complex issue (at least, complex as it seemed to me) "Think Customer". By placing oneself in the shoes of the Customer and gaining empathy with his/her situation, it is far easier to determine the optimal course of action. Rather than provide me with one answer to my specific question, I had been given a way of analysing future potential problems with an easily handled rubric.

I can provide one vignette which illustrates this feel for the market:

> I was in deep debate with a German senior Director who happened to be a double PhD (with an innate predisposition to measuring things). He wanted to label one of our Road products as 'European Road Express', I quickly rejected this pointing out, that to the British customer, this would suggest an overseas shipment and they would not see it as a relevant service for a consignment going from say Blackburn to Manchester. Unfortunately, this rapidly degenerated into a heated argument and I was accused of not understanding European geography and an unprofessional and cavalier approach to marketing. Eventually, he conceded somewhat and told me that the only way he would accept my argument, was if I

conducted some empirical market research to back up my assertion and that was the end to it. Much to my chagrin I had to spend some of *my* limited research budget and four months setting up the required focus groups to prove my point.   On receiving the clearly incontrovertible results he grudgingly accepted them but added that we should now both be very happy that we had resolved the problem 'scientifically'.   I was incensed and pointed out that we had spent four months and no small sum of money proving something which firstly, I already knew and secondly, the reason that the company employed me was <u>exactly</u> <u>because this *was* the kind of thing that I knew.</u>

I am ashamed to confess to a clear case of schadenfreude on being told some years later that my successor had physically grabbed that same Director by the throat and physically thrown him out of his office after a similar argument (which merely earned him a written rebuke from HR).

From one step removed, it is easy to see this as a classic case of cultural misunderstanding, perhaps the German obsession with measurement and the British tendency to arrogance. I refer to this in a later section in which I discuss my Brand Map.   But more importantly, how could I have turned this situation to my advantage and avoided alienating a potential ally?   Perhaps by looking for some research or data that would have appealed to his search for scientific certainty?   My solution proved the point and maybe won this particular skirmish – but I do not think it positioned me well in the longer term.

So, in summary, tacit knowledge would seem to encompass the 'feel' that one has for any given situation and 'luck' is the reward that the skilled practitioner receives for their understanding and response to a turbulent environment.

2.2.7 Conclusions on Epistemology

Epistemological commitments exist in our everyday lives and contribute towards explaining the conditions and limits of what is deemed as justified knowledge. By using Merton's (1979) ethos we can see how we come "to know" and what we experience as being true or false, what we mean by true or false, and indeed whether we think that true and false are viable constructs.

This study of epistemology does not provide a scheme of rules but instead, gives a range of different approaches to management and organisational research through which people can reflect on their philosophical assumptions. In any discipline, profession, occupation or everyday activity where knowledge claims are routinely made, epistemology contributes by clarifying the condition and limits of what is construed as justified knowledge. Therefore it applies to management and organisational research (Schön D. A., 1991).

Managers, researchers, management strategy and policy or intervention must undergo epistemological processes in order to authorise the knowledge claims that justify its substantive content. The main implication for managers and researchers is to reflect upon the nature of philosophical assumptions.

Moreover, philosophy of science suggests that epistemological commitments are not only unavoidable but also highly contentious; making unexamined epistemological assumptions and being unaware of their origin are not a good practice. Irresolvable disagreements over epistemology and the standards by which the warranted knowledge is discriminated can be further found in epistemological literature. However, although literature relating to epistemology seems to be irresolvable in discerning acceptable knowledge, extending knowledge in the area will somehow provide another approach in management and organisational research depending on the readers' critical judgement.

From the discussion above, the conclusion can be made that in developing acceptable or legitimate knowledge, epistemological commitments plays an important rôle in each individual. Everybody including researchers or non-researcher will experience epistemological processes, i.e. managers in their daily routine will go through in making sense of organisational events. Being able to evaluate epistemologically will expose managers to critical interrogation.

Finally we might ask the question is Hermeneutics a useful and legitimate branch of Philosophy? (Westphal, 1999). This may or may not be true, but we can reasonably assert that critical theory, perspective and personal interest are an inevitable epistemic fact of life. Attempts to delineate life by the means of pseudo-scientific, detached and neutral perspectives are fundamentally flawed. Research can be carried out on the past, the recent past (somewhat akin to the present) but not the future, but attempts to mine facts from the past are limited to our interpretations which are but *traces* of the past. (Ricoeur, 2006).

This section has shown that epistemology is important in many respects. It is now realised to be an important subject providing reflection and evaluation in management and organizations (Wong E. S., 2004) & (2003). There is no doubt that epistemological commitment is inevitable but also subject to much debate.

This section also tries to provide us with ideas for different ways for conducting research in management and organizations. The main point here is to see how we come up with particular questions and to analyse the different ways for assessing and evaluating different research methodologies in order to answer our research questions and to determine the possible ways that we can evaluate our research outputs, and finally to show that all these decision-makings are based on our underlying epistemological premises. It tries to provide an overview of the main epistemological

debates in social science and it tries to show that these epistemological debates lead to different ways of undertaking management and organizational research.

Having discussed Epistemology, in the next section I continue with my theoretical underpinnings and move on to discuss Action Research and Critical Theory, focusing particularly on the work of Jürgen Habermas.

2.3 Action Research and Critical Theory[74]

As the physicist Leo Szilard remarked, apropos his unpublished diary, 'I am going to record the facts for the information of God.... He knows the facts, but He doesn't know this version of the facts.'

This section analyses the critical theoretic approaches to management studies. Critical theory provides a powerful critique of positivism as it rejects the suggestion of a theory-neutral observational language. Critical theory believes that researchers may and can influence their research results based upon their accumulated experiences. Habermas, one of the emblematic philosophers for critical theory, emphasised that the ideal speech situation is vital to find truth in open and honest debate. Emancipatory values matter, however, the ways in which we analyse and interpret empirical data, are contaminated by the researcher's socio-cultural factors and sensory experiences. Lastly, critical theory is a valuable and interesting approach towards management research providing a framework through which it is possible to examine the political nature of management and organizations.

As Nietzsche put it, there are no facts – just interpretations (1901/1967). A cinematic illustration of the existence of multiple realities based on the accounts of four different characters is shown in the film Rashomon (Kurosawa, 1950). The actors in the movie reputedly asked Kurosawa which account was the true one; he replied that the co-existence of different and conflicting stories was not amenable to such simple reductionism.

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[74] Much of this chapter was published in Dent. M. M., Wong Sek Khin E. & bin Ismail M.N. (2012) Action Research and critical theoretic approaches to management studies. No.4 (130), pp366-371

Critical theory has some similarities with postmodernism. Critical theory focuses upon the inherent connection between politics, values and knowledge and, thereby, provokes a deeper consideration of the politics and values which underpin and legitimize the authority of `scientific' knowledge (Alvesson & Willmott, 1988). If traced back through history, critical theory is sourced from the Frankfurt School and the work of Max Horkeimer, Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse. Initially, the methodology was purely Marxist, but later ameliorated somewhat to become simply opposed to Capitalism. A number of important research topics were addressed in the early works of this School of thought, including the nature and emergence of Fascism, authority and the family, and art and popular culture including human freedom, Wong (2003) & (2004). Nowadays, the purpose of critical theory is seen as to identify the social changes necessary to generate a fair and equitable society (Layder, 1994). The focus is thus necessarily on issues of power and ideology and the importance of praxis which is a source of critical nourishment for the wellbeing of mankind (Prasad & Caproni, 1997).

In this chapter, I focus particularly on the work of Habermas, the link between critical theory with management research, conceptualizations of management, the Habermasian approach, and the rôle of researcher. Habermas is renowned for his revitalisation of the critical theory paradigm (Pusey, 1987).

2.3.1 Habermas

Habermas was a later member of the 'Frankfurt School' in the mid 1950s under the direction of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer following the completion of his Doctorate , and actually became the head of the Frankfurt School or Institute for Social Research many years later in 1980.   His theory (the theory of communicative action) looks into the capability of language to transform society, and indeed that language is central to the construction of all social life and the understanding thereof.   In this he extends the work of Wittgenstein's (2001) language games, inter alia.

Habermas rejects the idea that there is a theory-neutral observational language. Without this Postivism is unable to ignore the effects of the epistemic subject concerning what is known.   He believes that knowledge is influenced from the very beginning as a result of socio-cultural experiences.

According to Habermas there are three types of knowledge which all relate to specific human interests: Empirical-analytical science, historical-hermeneutic science and self-knowledge.   This latter knowledge domain is fuelled by self-reflection and then a desire to resist domination, which of course is consistent with Marxist thought.

There is one external 'reality' in Habermas's view but our view is coloured by our own "anthropologically deep seated interests".

Habermas examines language and how certain social structures may produce and distort communications in order to influence society's understanding of the 'truth'.   Thus, the extent to which actual communication deviates from the ideal, and hence from the truth, depends upon the degree of repression in society.   The goal of Habermas's Critical Theory is `a form of life free from unnecessary domination in all its forms is inherent in the notion of truth' (McCarthy, 1978).

So in summary Habermas has three main criticisms of post-modernism: the lack of a theory neutral observational language, the application of only one perspective and the failure to recognise that truth actually emanates from the public.

2.3.2 Critical theory and Management Research

At a general level, the aim of critical theoretic approaches to management studies is to understand how the practices and institutions of management are developed and legitimised within the relationships of power and domination such as found in capitalism and fundamental to this approach is the belief that these systems can be transformed to enable a participant's emancipation.   This is achieved by a process through which individuals and groups become freed from repressive social and ideological conditions that restrict the development and expression of human consciousness.   However, emancipation is not about the re-engineering of work practices by management to give workers greater autonomy and thereby increase their motivation as this would merely represent an alternative way of privileging the aims of management.   Rather, the process of emancipation must involve a continuing process of critical self-reflection and associated self-transformation.

As Parker (1995) contends, because truth is seen as a temporary consensus, values become of central importance when adopting a critical perspective. Thus, as Habermas argues, knowledge must discard the illusion of objectivism which `prevents consciousness of the interlocking of knowledge with interests from the lifeworld' (Habermas J. , 1987). Nor does critical theory advocate the abandonment of epistemological questions.   Instead, as Habermas has argued, different kinds of science are understood to be embedded in different kinds of human interests (Alvesson & Deetz, 1996).   For emancipation to take place, there is a need to counter the influence

of `scientism' which occurs when `we no longer understand science as one form of possible knowledge but rather identify knowledge with science' (Habermas J. , 1971).

In the field of management and organization studies, Alvesson & Deetz (1996) indicate two different approaches that have been used on the subject of developing critical theory, namely ideology critique and managerial ideology. Ideology critique often appears   in ad hoc and reactive situations, where the researcher is seeking to explain what has happened in the past rather than to predict the future. Management ideology overemphasises communication and ways of eliminating the communication barrier, and fundamental to both approaches to critical theory is the focus on the emancipatory power of reason.

2.3.3 Conceptualisations of Management

The main underlying metaphors of much traditional management theory are functionalist. As a result of this functionalist approach, organizations are often assumed to be unified wholes with management goals representing everyone within the organization. Willmott (1995) discusses how this rational, technocratic notion of management is best seen in the representation of management knowledge as science, arguing that this helps in securing the exercise of managerial prerogative. Critical theory fights against this tendency and, this theory believes that each employee has a different voice. The Critical Theory epistemological position is to dismiss existing management theory as an expression of technocratic thinking that seeks to constrain human potential and aspiration in order to explore the true human personifications within the organization. The importance of organizational survival is often stressed and

that vested human interests are something to be eradicated, as they are considered a dysfunctional element of organizational life.

There remains a good deal of debate about the rôle of managers from a critical perspective and whether they should be also be considered as an oppressed group suitable for research. This thesis does not attempt to answer this question, but it would be an interesting area for further research in my view. As mentioned previously, there has been a tendency to view management as a homogeneous group by some critical theorists, particularly those inspired by Marx. The focus has been, up to now, on the fundamental conflict between groups within organizations (management and workers) and insufficient attention has been given to differences and conflicts within these two groups. Thus debates continue as to the way in which critical theory can be used in management studies and whether there are risks that it could be used to reinforce rather than challenge the dominant elite. Fundamental to this approach is that management is seen as a social and political phenomenon rather than a technical function, and it is this approach, coupled with the emancipatory ideal, which clearly impacts upon the approach towards a research methodology and the relationship between researcher and researched.

John Forrester (1992) uses Habermas' theory of communicative action as the basis for analysing text from a municipal staff meeting to show the impact of power relations upon the planning process. He argues that doing fieldwork in a Habermasian way enables researchers to examine the processes and the outcomes of relations of power. However, doing research in Habermasian way is demanding as it is challenging to achieve consensus among the respondents. In a later work (1993) he identified the three criteria for the successful application of critical theory;

- Empirically sound and descriptively meaningful.

- Interpretively plausible and phenomomenologically meaningful.

- Critically pitched and ethically insightful

My readers will have to judge whether I successfully meet these criteria.

2.3.4 Participation and Critical Theory

Kincheloe and McLaren (1998) as well as Sayer (1981) (1992) later employed critical theory in conducting research in a more temperate manner, where a questionnaire and open ended format and anonymous method were used in their studies.   Reason (1998) later discusses three approaches towards participative research co-operative inquiry, participatory action research and action inquiry, each of which he argues could be seen to be informed by a critical theoretic approach.

Co-operative inquiry directly involves the people being researched in undertaking the research process.   This primarily concerns Participatory action research and reducing concerns for epistemology and methodology (Reason P. , 1998) with two objectives: one is to produce knowledge and action directly useful to a group and the second is to empower people through raising consciousness. Whilst some researchers have applied the term to their work in Western organizations, others claim that the origins of participatory action research in under-privileged parts of the world make it inappropriate for Western organizations and societies.   Action research refer as a form of collective self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices by qualitative ways. Fundamental to these three approaches, is that the research makes a difference to individuals' experience and that those who are being researched play an active rôle in the process, rather than being passive subjects.

Harvey (1990) has argued that the conventional relationship between the researcher and the researched assumed by a positivist stance is contrary to the aims of critical theory because in the positivist epistemological position, it presupposes a one-way flow of information which leaves the respondent in exactly the same position after having shared knowledge and ignores the self-reflexive process that imparting the information.

What is assumed by a positivist stance is contrary to that of critical theory as positivism expresses the rôle of the researcher as just an explorer where the researcher does not influence the results, hence, the research conclusions are considered value free. However, according to critical theory, the ways in which we analyse and interpret empirical data are contaminated by the researcher's socio-cultural background and sensory experience, the results of a positivist's research cannot be treated as indisputable fact. Hence, since the acceptance that knowledge is not independent of personal interests and values, some analysts argue that `validity' may be an inappropriate term in a critical research context. In a contrasting viewpoint, why should we proceed if the results are not valid?

2.3.5 Critical Theory

Critical theory has a lofty aim of enabling members of society to alter their lives for the better by fostering in them important self-knowledge and understanding of the social conditions under which they operate, such knowledge then providing a basis for emancipatory change.

Alvesson & Willmott (1992) argue that *"central to critical theory is the emancipatory potential of reason to reflect critically on how the reality of the social world, including the construction of self is socially produced and therefore, open to transformation. The task of critical theory is to combine philosophy with social science to facilitate the*

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development of change in an emancipatory direction ". Flood & Jackson (1991, p. 49) see emancipation as an interest in freeing *"individuals from constraints imposed by power relations and in learning, through a process of genuine participatory democracy, involving discursive will formulation to control their own destiny".* The individual's power to reason and consequent self-emancipation plays a major rôle in critical theory.

Habermas (1984) highlights the important rôle that language and communication play within critical theory when he suggests that people can follow two fundamental postures in a social situation – achieving success or communication. Actions toward achieving success (purposive rational) can be either instrumental or strategic. Instrumental actions treats participants as inanimate constraints who can be manipulated to serve the self-interests of the main actor. In contrast, strategic action treats participants as intelligent, involved players with their own interests and aims, thus requiring a strategic approach to achieve properly, the main actor's self-interest.

The second fundamental posture that actors may represent is that of communication, the primary desire is to achieve a consensus and understanding. Hirschheim & Klein (1994) argue that a communicative orientation is directed to sense making – an emergent process that involves mutual understanding and a shared appreciation of situations based on common shared background assumptions and beliefs. Where such a common base does not exist, discursive action may ensue. Discursive action may result when participants have some doubts as to the clarity, truthfulness, correctness or appropriateness of any communicated message. Instrumental and strategic action fundamentally emphasises control, whereas communicative and discursive action emphasises sense making and argumentation.

For example, critical theory could emphasise the rôle that language plays in social situations and how language can implicitly construct a particular reality. Critical

theory also makes clear the importance of identifying inequitable structures – such identification providing the opportunity for understanding and consequent self-emancipation. This focus on understanding and description suggests that an examination of the rôle of language plays in the corporate change process and the possible emancipatory opportunity provided by changing vocabulary in certain situations. To give but one example, my UK Country Manager was unhappy with the apparent pejorative name ascribed to the offices (or Stations) other than London, generally, they were referred to as the "Regions" and that did indeed possess a sort of country-cousin type aura. So, the ukase came that the term 'The Regions' was now no longer permitted within the Company. However, as no new name was offered in its stead a new term was soon coined 'STOLs' or Stations Outside London, so unfortunately, the stigma remained.

2.3.6 Interpretive Theory

Orlikowski & Baroudi (1991) classify case study research traditions as basically following three major philosophical approaches – positivist, interpretive and critical, the interpretive and critical responding to shortcomings in the positivist. In its neglect of contemporary realist approaches, such a division reflects a commonly held view equating realism with positivism. This section calls for a recognition that modern realist approaches can address many of the criticisms of positivism.

Orlikowski & Baroudi (1991, p. 13) present interpretivism as emphasising the social nature of reality:

> *"Interpretivism asserts that reality, as well as our knowledge thereof, is a social product and hence incapable of being understood independent of the social actors (including the researchers) that construct and make sense of that reality"*

Klein & Myers (1991, p. 69) describe interpretive research from a practical, methods based focus:

"Case study research can be classified as interpretive if it is assumed that our knowledge of reality is gained only through social constructions such as language, consciousness, shared meanings, documents, tools and other artefacts."

They suggest a number of principles for good interpretive practice and specifically argue that a major problem with many interpretive projects is their failure to clearly define the emergent nature of research:

"we are (often) given little understanding of how the researcher's analysis developed over the course of the project. As it stands we are presented with a finished piece of interpretive research with few indications of its emergent nature" (1991, p. 84).

Walsham (1991, p. 4) suggests that interpretive methods of research focus on understanding the context in which the information system is placed and how the information system influences and is influenced by that context:

Interpretive methods of research start from the position that our knowledge of reality, including the domain of human action, is a social construction by human actors and this applies equally to researchers. Thus there is no objective reality which can be discovered and replicated by others..... Interpretivism is thus an epistemological position, concerned with the approaches to the understanding of reality and asserting that all knowledge is necessarily a social construct and thus subjective.

Subtle differences between the three definitions of interpretivism emphasise the divergent nature of the approaches within this paradigm. Walsham/Klein & Myers (op.cit.) present a weaker constructivist argument than Orlikowski & Baroudi (op.cit) who suggest that reality itself is socially constructed. Walsham/Klein & Myers present our knowledge of reality as socially constructed rather than reality itself.

Orlikowski & Baroudi (1991, p. 18) summarise the weakness of the purely interpretive approach:

> *First, the interpretive perspective does not examine the conditions, often external which give rise to certain meanings and experiences. Second, research in this perspective omits to explain the unintended consequences of action, which by definition cannot be explained by reference to the intentions of the humans concerned..... Third, the interpretive perspective does not address structural conflicts within society and organisations and ignores contradictions which may be endemic in social systems.....Finally, the interpretive perspective neglects to explain historical change, that is how a particular social order came to by what it is and how it is likely to vary over time.*

Klein & Myers incorporate critical aspects within their underlying principles and perhaps suggest a critical interpretive approach in their demand for suspicion and contextualisation. The principles they suggest help address some of the shortcomings identified by Orlikowski & Baroudi.

For example, an interpretive approach should attempt to critically describe and understand the happenings from the perspective of the organizational players. Such examination may reflect on the prevailing level of morale, ambitions and fears of the individuals involved. The research question (which may be quite vague at the outset of the project) is largely emergent from interaction and reflection. The concept of the

hermeneutic circle can help to obviate the neglect of external influences (or macro-level impositions) through reflection based upon the continual movement from the whole to the parts and back again.

So, for the interpretive researcher there are two major stories – that for the researcher and that for the researched and each story must be told. Reflective examination of the extent to which each are affected by the other, also needs to be included and continually re-examined.

However, a further caveat remains; and that is that interpretation is most certainly a factor when it comes to scientific research, a fact recognised by the Copenhagen interpretation (encapsulating Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle and Schrodinger's Cat) in Quantum theory which accepts that both the subject and object are inextricably linked. So, interpretation is not so easily applied to a two by two matrix explaining reality and whether it is socially constructed or not, the real reality is a question of the *degree* of interpretation either implicit or explicit in the presentation of results.

2.3.7 Why I selected Critical Theory

Critical theory provides a powerful critique of positivism as it rejects the idea of a theory-neutral observational language, by showing how knowledge is underpinned by values and interests. As for the rôle of researchers, critical theory believes they are able to influence the results based on their accumulated experiences.

Habermas voiced criticism of the processes of modernisation, where he saw modernisation as an inflexible direction forced through by economic and administrative rationalisation, and he describes it as where "communication within these institutions is systematically distorted". He urges that public life cannot develop where public matters

are not discussed by citizens. An "ideal speech situation" requires participants to have the same capacities of discourse and social equality, and in this version of the consensus theory of truth, Habermas maintains that truth is what would be agreed upon in an ideal speech situation. Once we achieve the ideal speech situation where communicative distortions are removed, then we are able to assess the validity of particular claims to truth in open and honest debate.

Looking into the conceptualisations of management, the main underlying metaphors of much traditional management theory are functionalist. As a result of this functionalist approach, organizations are often assumed to be unified wholes with management goals representing everyone within the organization. Critical theory fights against this tendency, as the belief is that each employee has their different voices and functionalism seeks to constrain human potential and desire to debate the conflict within and among the people within the organization.

The Habermasian approach has been widely used in doing fieldwork, because in a Habermasian way, it enables researchers to examine the processes and the outcomes of relations of power even though doing research, but this manner of research is demanding, as it is challenging to achieve consensus among the respondents.

Emancipatory values matter, what was assumed by a positivist stance is contrary to critical theory as the positivist's rôle as a researcher acts only as an explorer because the researchers will not be allowed to influence the results so that the research remains, apparently, value free. However, according to critical theory, the ways in which we, as researchers, analyse and interpret empirical data, the results are contaminated by the researcher's socio-cultural factors and sensory experience.

Lastly, even though there are a number of problematic issues here, critical theory is an interesting approach towards management research as it provides a framework through

which it is possible to examine the political nature of management and organizations. It provides a standpoint from which to critique management processes and institutions.   I will elucidate further on this with regard to specific management research later within this thesis.

On a more prosaic level, it is also possible to consider whether Action Research has any practical day to day applications in addition to its more theoretical footings as a research paradigm.   I have already alluded to the strong connection that I see with the Japanese concept of Kaizen (continuous improvement) and that of Action Research.   They both come with the idea that some improvement may be possible whilst simultaneously accepting that any change may be fraught with difficulties and a rapid return to the drawing board may be required.

I will give one example which shows my approach to a day to day application, which my children will attest to. At the end of a day spent together, we would list the two best and one worst thing about the day that had just transpired.   We took it in turns to talk, sometimes I would start, sometimes my Daughter and sometimes my Son (this was mainly between their ages of 5 to 15).   Their answers gave me some idea as to how things could be improved in the future.[75]   Like instant on-line Customer Satisfaction surveys these provide an immediacy of response which is far more likely to accurately capture the true feelings of the respondents and hence are intrinsically more actionable.

Finally, we can conclude that critical theory, interpretive theory and interpretive approaches can provide useful insights into a research situation but that the conclusions generated are largely dependent on the particular approach selected.

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[75] This practice of post facto reflection has also recently been taken up by my Daughter; (Davies, 2012)

In the next section, I shall delve more deeply into the development of critical theory and its historical antecedents. It is not an attempt to summarise all of the main advances in philosophy which pertain to my thesis, merely to identify those specific issues which I feel have particular relevance to my thesis.

2.4 Critical Theory and Philosophy

This section proceeds in more detail into Critical Theory, its standing in the field of Philosophy and its' historical antecedents. I also make mention of certain Eastern philosophies and their relationship and commonalities with Critical Theory. As I currently reside at the confluence of Asia (a.k.a. Kuala Lumpur)[76] I will also make reference to my own experience amongst the Malays, Chinese, Indians and other Asian races. I shall draw heavily on the theory in this Chapter and also in my last two Chapters where I reflect on major incidents, decisions and episodes of my career and what I have learned from them. As such, it is a critical keystone of this thesis. By way of a conclusion I provide my own views as to how I believe Critical Theory will develop in the future.

I have oft referred to the importance of language in this thesis. Indeed, I trust that one of my contributions is to conceptualise how the brain pictures the idea of Business. In this respect, it is noteworthy that the conceptualisation of Eastern Philosophy has been hampered by the indeterminacy of language. Many writers have examined various Eastern philosophies and found "it subjected to much gross distortion" (Parkes, 1992) by American/Christian philosophical syntax. The phenomenological and existential

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[76] Or as the Malaysian Tourism Ministry refer to it in their strap line "Malaysia Truly Asia". Kuala Lumpur actually translates as" Muddy Confluence".

concepts of continental Europe were actually far more in synchronicity with Asian thought.

2.4.1 Major Asian Philosophies

Most Western texts will commence with the Ancient Greeks, primarily, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.   This I feel to be a mistake as although these clearly were the founding fathers of Western philosophy, it does rather ignore the fact that there was much happening in the East long before these times.

I can identify four major schools of thought in Asian Philosophy, namely; Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism and Neo-Confucianism.   I see these as Philosophies and not religions for the following reasons: There is a clear distinction in Buddhism between the Fo Chiao (religion) and Fo Hsüeh (learning, a.k.a. philosophy).   Similarly with Taoism, there are two streams – Tao Chia (the Taoist school) and Tao Chiao (religion). And as for Confucianism this is not a religion, according to Fung (A short history of Chinese Philosophy (Ed.Derk Bodde), 1948).

Before I try to connect the schools of thought with Critical Theory, it is necessary to describe some of the essential underpinnings of Eastern Philosophy.   One of the most important distinctions comes from the initial starting point.   Western Philosophy (i.e. from the ancient Greeks onwards) has generally started with what can be known and attempted to build an understanding of life, its meaning and the development of human knowledge from these initial premises.   Eastern Philosophy, on the other hand does not possess this concept of improvement as a necessary condition.   Instead, life is positioned as a cycle with birth and death following each other in an unavoidable wheel of life.   Buddhists do see the possibility of moving on to a higher existential plane following re-incarnation – but this is within the religious school.   Otherwise, Neo-

Confucianism sees each iteration as a re-birth commencing in the same starting position as in all previous starting positions.

This is best encapsulated in the Yin/Yang idea. Yin; cold and winter, Yang represents warmth and summer. Yang is creation and Yin is destruction. Neither can exist without the other. Birth can only come from Death. One example, given to me by my Karate Sensei (see Figure 1.17) of Yin and Yang, was of Excrement and Food and, both are the same, both are necessary inputs and outputs of each other. In some eastern nations the beautiful Lotus flower encapsulates this idea of beauty emerging from the filthy depths.

Heraclitus in Greece in the 6th Century BC also had a similar notion of the recurrence of events and this was (many centuries later) taken up by Nietzsche.

The symbol of Yin/Yang is well known in the West, as perhaps is the idea of the circle, what is perhaps less well understood is that the white area of the circle commences simultaneously with the phasing out of the black. Each one is built upon the foundations of the other in the same way as Summer follows Winter. As with Plato's charioteer the task is to control both the Black Horse and the White in order to win the race. Pirsig (1974) characterised Plato's two horses as representing reason and emotion. Oddly enough the two major drivers in my brand map (see later sections).

Figure 2.2   Yin and Yang

With all these four approaches to the understanding of knowledge comes respect for elders, parents, tradition and one's place in society (power distance as Hofstede (1991) has labelled it). What can be immediately seen from this standpoint is that the concept of critique of a sifu, guru or teacher would not sit well within Eastern Philosophy. Indeed the Sage (or wise man) is seen as being the best qualified to rule and judge under all Eastern philosophies. Confucius would further add that no other contending ideas should be even countenanced.

And indeed I can testify to this with my own (Asian) Students who are most reluctant to query my teachings or my perspective. They are instructed from a very early age that under no circumstances are they ever to question a Teacher or Sifu. And this, to the point where manifest mistakes, are seldom questioned (and according to my contemporaries in Malaysia) if they are, they are met with physical punishment.

As a further example, in my first week as a member of the DHL Board in Malaysia I spent a couple of hours with my team discussing our strategy. I found it difficult to elicit any useful ideas and it took some time before one of the more senior managers said that I was the Officer in Charge and they would do whatever I proposed.[77] I rapidly pointed out that although I had a good understanding of the Organizational strategy, Vision, Mission and Product line, I could not speak Tamil, Mandarin nor Melayu, had no knowledge of the Customer base, did not understand the media landscape and had no conception of the competitive position in Malaysia – therefore we needed a team approach to produce a cogent and (hopefully) successful strategy.

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[77] The respect for one's elders is fundamental in Confucianism and also deeply engrained within Malay society which has a saying 'banyak makan garam' which means s/he has eaten much salt – in other words they have lived longer, had more experience and hence are better able to make good decisions. (Puteh-Behak, 2014)

The major difference between Asian and Western Philosophies (as Schopenhauer identified) is that the former started with a definite religious perspective and yet both systems have come to similar conclusions on questions relating to ethics, epistemology etc.   Schopenhauer talked of "Will", the Chinese talk of Chi (or Qi) and modern day physicists talk of Energy.   It would seem that they may all be talking about the same thing.

2.4.1.1 Buddhism

The antecedents of Buddhism can be traced back to the Vedas[78] in the 10th to 15th Centuries BCE, from these the essence of the Hindu religion emerged.   However, religion is not my focus so I will say no more on this.   Buddhism emanated from India, although the Buddha was reputedly born in Nepal.   Much Eastern philosophy and religion has been cross fertilised by contact with other philosophies such that in many temples that I have visited in Asia (e.g. Angkor Wat in Cambodia) the Hindu and Buddhist sit side by side. Similarly Buddhism interacts strongly with both Taoism and Confucianism and the latter two are also both inter-related.   Indeed, there are reports (although no evidence) that Confucius may have met with Lao Tzu (a philosopher strongly connected to Taoism). As such, a number of concepts and beliefs are common across all platforms and differences are not as easy to identify as it might at first appear – partly because different schools within the same paradigm may also have held conflicting views.

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[78] Veda or Vedic translates as wisdom or knowledge and hence is equivalent to our 21st Century concept of epistemology.

The goal of Buddhism is enlightenment – full understanding or ultimate wisdom perhaps. This can only be achieved by releasing attachment and connections to the everyday world and recognising the necessity of birth following death.

'Buddha' means awakened in Sanskrit. 'Budh' is refined mind at the junction point in between 'turiya' the fourth state of consciousness or transcendental consciousness, or 'purusha budh' in Patanjali's yoga sutras.[79] Enlightenment is the internalisation of the fourth state of transcendental consciousness into the three other states of consciousness: waking, sleeping and dreaming so that it becomes permanent. This is no longer a state of consciousness and is now actually a level of life called 'nirvikalpa samadhi' or permanent eternal bliss in cosmic consciousness or the fifth state. By moving from the three states of consciousness to the fourth one can achieve what is termed Skill in Action. This, I consider very similar to the concept of Tacit Knowledge and akin to the idea of Fluid Intelligence. The transcendental consciousness or fourth level is (in my view) achieved through the action of reflexivity. Sadly, I suspect that moving on to the fifth state may take me considerably longer, if ever. That is even assuming I have actually achieved level four.

I will refer Buddhism once more in my final chapter and I will also refer to my own dream analysis in a later section.

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[79] In Malay the word 'budi' has the same cognate Sanskrit root.

2.4.1.2 Confucianism

Confucius' teachings were documented in the 5th century BC, some little time before Socrates was born. Confucius was an ardent supporter of education, this was essential to civilisation, mind, body and soul. The concept of the Lifelong Learner (or perpetual student) is one which I feel sure he would have approved of.

Chinese philosophy is well documented (if not necessarily well understood), but there are other cultures where concepts of religion, belief, morals and knowledge are discussed but these tend to have an oral rather than written tradition. Nonetheless, we can frequently learn much from them. I had the privilege of sharing a platform once with Wade Davis, the Ethno botanist, and was astonished to learn of the cornucopia of efficacious herbs that were known only to small pockets of the human race. I also find that I share beliefs with the Aborigines of Australia e.g. rejecting the concept of any one person "owning" land. Ownership to the Aborigines translates into merely the Guardian of the land for future generations and the commonweal (an idea which also is central in the Quran, but which the oil producing Arab nations have conveniently, if temporarily, forgotten). This does, of course, conflict with the western concept of property rights on which the whole of capitalism is built. Perhaps the Chinese disdain for the law of copyright and patents is not so surprising after all...

Similarly, the Chinese level of affinity for the power of a supreme ruler and the importance of Society over the that of the family, is encapsulated in one of Confucius' later critics; Mo Tzu ("Tzu" as previously described is an honorific equivalent to Master). Mo described love for others as a worthy goal which would assist in the creation of an ultra-utilitarian state. He also held that multiple perspectives could create dis-unity, hence, the most virtuous and able man should be the only person permitted to take the lead and establish the moral code. Therefore, the authority of the

State and the supreme leader must be absolute (Mei Y. , 1929) & (1934) – which appears to be well accepted by the majority of China's population today in the 21st Century.

2.4.1.3 Indian Philosophy

The most well-known of Indian philosophies is that of the understanding of Veda or knowledge, the classic Vedic text in this respect being the 'The Bhagavat Gita' which was analysed by Marharishi Mahesh Yogi in 1969 (Maharishi, 1969).   Much of Maharishi's writings relate to the understanding of pure consciousness or 'Tureya' (Maharishi, 1966).   I have commented on the efficacy of his technique of Transcendental Meditation in the retention of Fluid Intelligence in an earlier section. Fluid Intelligence being a close ally of Tacit Knowledge in my view.

According to the Gita, when examining one's actions, it is important to analyse the not the action per se, but the motive behind the action (Leaman, 2000). There is in this idea the concept of a continuum betwixt selfishness and detachment. Personally, I do not feel this. In my brand map (see later sections) I clearly can perceive myself as a selfish individual, however, I can also detach myself from events in much the same manner as L'Etranger (Camus, 2000). I see these two characteristics as distinctly different and the decisions I have made in life have been made in both modes – sometimes in active conflict with one another.

One of the World's oldest religions is that of Jainism which can be traced back to the 4th Century BCE.   Whilst well known for their advocacy of non-violence towards any living creature, the Jains also have an interesting perspective on epistemology.   I have

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previously related the parable of the six blind men and the elephant, this encapsulates the idea that even multiple different perspectives may still not reveal the whole truth. Jains also posit five or more levels of knowledge, varying from sensory cognition to omniscience. Each one of these levels includes some degree of interplay between knowledge and intuition, but it is only at the highest level that the full coalescence of intuition between all of the levels is finally achieved (Potter, 1972, pp. 212-214). To me this resonates of the concepts of experience and tacit knowledge that I have referred to earlier in this thesis (see, inter alia Chapter 3.4).

The Jainist philosophical constructs would seem to have also heavily influenced both Buddhism and Hinduism.

2.4.1.4 Taoism

Prior to Confucius, the military strategist Sun Tzu[80] was writing in the 6th century BC. His writing (Sawyer, 1994) seems strangely relevant to the 21st century corporate battlefield and indeed I have, on occasion, considered his maxims and found them both wise and applicable to my own problems. His writings however, were focused on strategy rather than philosophy per se, yet he is regarded as a member of the Taoist school.

'Tao' or The Way, is an approach to dealing with the problems of life and our understanding of our rôle in life. In actual fact the word Tao is very difficult to explain. One definition that we have is from Lao Tzu (or Old Master) who wrote in a work entitled Tao Te Ching:

> "The Tao that can be spoken of is not the real Tao

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[80] The suffix Tzu is a term of respect and can be translated as equivalent to the English word "Master". The existence of two Suns in that period has left some doubt as to who the author of "The Art of War" actually was.

The name that can be named is not the true name"

The 'Tao Te Ching' could be translated as the Virtuous Way to Power, but there is no common agreement on the correct rendition (Palmer, 1991). Lao Tzu is not actually regarded as the Father of Taoism for the simple reason that the Tao pre-existed all things. However, he is seen as one of the earliest sages to document the thinking behind the Tao.

As I have explained in an earlier chapter, there is a clear distinction in Taoist Philosophy between "ming" (the name) and "shih" (the actuality) hence once seeing an event there is no difficulty in describing it, and yet in using names in describing it, we are unaware of the fact that they are but just names (Fung, 1948) . Lao Tzu (of the Tao School) spoke of the unnameable or those things which lie outwith the shapes and forms that we have experience of. One example of the importance of the relativity of language which Lao Tzu gives, is the very basic concept of Sunrise and Sunset. Whilst making perfect sense from a human geo-stationary perspective, it is nonsensical when seen from an extra-terrestrial viewpoint as we implicitly understand that the Sun does not rise nor set in any astronomical sense.

This is important to this thesis as it links to the "Linguistic Turn" referred to by Rorty (1967) and the importance of the use of language.

Taoism is also interpreted as the "do nothing" or "wu-wei" philosophy which in translates as a rather accepting and possibly defeatist attitude to life. This is inaccurate and in my view has some commonality to the Thomas Killman avoiding approach to handling conflict. This has been characterised as that of the Turtle (avoiding confrontation) which is seen as a rather unproductive and not solving the problem approach to life. However, this can be very effective when avoiding potentially harmful confrontations and allows one to re-group, rethink and re-join the conflict later

once sure of one's ground. I have to admit that the Turtle approach to conflict management is one of my preferred methods and allows me to control my (potentially dangerous) initial outpourings of rage. Goleman (2006) would term this emotional control – part of his conception of emotional intelligence, The lesson from a Taoist viewpoint could be to "wait" or "pause" - and from a strategic perspective makes much sense. From a Killman perspective it is perhaps more of a positioning, as opposed to an attacking or defensive move. The problem remains and has to be dealt with. Yet, from the Taoist perspective, this is not true; your opponent may defeat himself, withdraw, offer parley or external circumstances may change in your favour. In my (limited) experience this conflict style works well. As a positional move, it is likely to strengthen one's standing. Keeping one's powder dry and not engaging unless necessary avoids the risk of injury, even in triumph, makes sense from a longer term survival perspective.

However, lacking decisiveness, appearing weak and not having the courage of your convictions can also be mortally wounding.

The Taoist approach can indeed be directly applied to the problems of everyday life and the reflective practitioner as clearly explained in a popular entree to Taoism; which is that of the A.A Milne's Winnie the Pooh (Hoff, The Tao of Pooh, 1982) which takes everyday examples and goes on to explain how the simple reductionist perspective is the one that leads to greatest understanding and hence, happiness.

More fundamentally the Taoist approach – or "the Way" accepts multiple perspectives as valid, if possibly conflicting, views of reality. The view from any side of the mountain is a true one but does not necessarily give an accurate representation of the whole. As such, only the one who has climbed the heights and is able to look down is capable of comprehending the total. So the Sage, or wise man, is the only one who has

the 360 degree vision necessary to totally comprehend the all.   One could say the all seeing eye of the Buddha.   The multiple perspectives (of an Objective Ontology, yet subjective Epistemology) seem to match my conception of Critical Theory.

2.4.1.4.1 Reflection on my adversarial approach

There is a good time to be a Turtle and a good time to be a Shark. But an analysis of one's competitors and their preferred strategies is key to success. More importantly being right is no compensation for losing.   In fact if you lose the debate despite the weight of evidence being on your side you are a failure.   If you can convince others of the verisimilitude of your argument in the face of scientific evidence to the contrary then you will succeed. This is possibly why IQ is no great predictor of managerial success in the business world.

Insight

I remember being in a large Client – Advertising Agency meeting in my early managerial days. We were in the Board Room of the London based agency with a relatively high powered group of very bright MBA qualified Product Managers, myself and a few other Marketing Managers, my Marketing Director and three senior Planning Managers from the Client side and a group of very bright media analysts, strategic planners and senior directors from the Agency.   At one point in the meeting I put forward my ideas – but was immediately put down by one of the Agency planners.   Injured by the rejection of my plan I retreated and reconsidered my evidence.   It took me a short time (overnight) to work out why my proposal was logical and in eventuality the refutation was very straightforward.   Reassured in my own ability and the justness of my cause I met with the Marketing Director the next day.   Sadly

he gave me short shrift. He acknowledged that I was correct – but this was of little value as I had had my opportunity to speak in the Planning meeting and the window had now closed.

2.4.2 Socrates, Plato & Aristotle

If Socrates is known for one thing it is the importance of Questions. Not vague or ambiguous questions, but deep, targeted, probing questions which build towards a conclusion or insight (we would call this knowledge or wisdom, although Socrates himself did not).   Starting with a general question will logically take us to further more detailed questions.   Yet, we cannot formulate the detailed questions until we have established the background to the issue – or indeed the definitions we are using – which again Socrates was insistent upon.   This resonates with me when I consider Bob Dick's opening question of a Consultant when starting an assignment with a new organisation "tell me about your company".   This is a very open question and one which allows the respondent to go in any direction s/he chooses but where they are more likely to touch on what the important issues or problems actually are.   These are referred to as "fuzzy" questions which lead to fuzzy answers, which allow slightly less fuzzy questions to be formed.   This Action Research type technique seems to follow the ladder of Socratic questioning.   More fundamentally, it also examines the precepts, definitions, assumptions and essential starting position (is this the correct place, are we asking the right people the right questions or are we going the wrong way?)   I saw the traffic sign below in Australia whilst attending an Action Research seminar in 2013, I sometimes wish I had had a Guardian Angel showing me this every time in my life that I was about to make a false assumption or wrong decision.   Socrates was also possibly the catalyst that sparked the concept of managing by wandering about.   I have incorporated this

aspect of Socratic philosophy in my trading name 'Stravaigin' as Socrates loved to walk the streets of ancient Athens and find discourse wherever he may be, I like to do likewise in the expanded Global society of the 21st Century.

Figure 2.3 Australian Road Sign

There is one further aspect of Greek philosophy that has significance for this thesis, and that is the Aristotelian concept of *phronesis*.   This is practical wisdom, but it also has moral overtones whereby, the individual understands what is morally correct behaviour not only in theory but also in individual real life situations (Dworkin R. , 2011). *Phronesis* is thus seen by Elkland (2008) as at the heart of action research.   I will refer in a later section to existential ethics whereby the individual has to take responsibility for his actions and own moral code.   *Phronesis* appears to encapsulate this aspect of authenticity or being true to one's self.   Indeed, this is the view is put forward by David Coghlan in his article examining existential ethics in action research (2013). This in turn links to the concept of espoused values in the living theory paradigm of Jack Whitehead (1989) in which this thesis is written.

2.4.3 Positivism

There have been many recent attacks on the virtue (or lack of) of Positivism. Like most extant paradigms it has arguments in its favour. And there is no doubt that it has contributed much to both Science and Philosophy. The key questions, however, are is it the current most popular paradigm and does it have any major weaknesses or flaws? The answer is "Yes" to both the first question and to the second. This is not to say that it has no value, merely that we need to be careful about its premises, methodology, conclusions and implications.

In some ways, Positivism can be viewed as following the rational world of Apollo, whilst Critical Theory follows the chaotic and emotional model of Zeus's other son Dionysus.

I have already referred to the incommensurability thesis which suggests that is not acceptable to mix or test results based on different research paradigms. If there is indeed one objective reality, then viewing it from different paradigms should surely not be a problem. I may quote the story of the six blind men examining an elephant and because of different perspectives they all have significantly different conclusions as to what kind of animal they have been presented with.[81] But with the correct lens, the Elephant is an Elephant viewed from whatever angle. This seems to me somewhat similar to Nelson Goodman's concept of different types of "right views" all may be correct in some sense whilst simultaneously giving us different views of the World.

This is further complicated by the ontological barrier of language. Within the physical sciences, the word "Mass" has different interpretations depending on whether the Classical or Relativistic model is applied (Hoffman, 1972) & (Kuhn T. S., 1977).

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[81] The origins of this parable are from the sub-continent and possibly Jainist (q.v).

Similarly the word "Gene" has had multiple meanings over a sixty year period (Carlson, 1966). And in the social sciences, more general terms describing paradigms or models are even more subject to creative reinterpretation at even more regular intervals; Post-modernism described as "The figment of a fetish" by Bernard Yack (1997) is a good example of how vague the term really is and how it is now used as a broad brush metaphor for virtually anything which does not accept conventional scientific assumptions or methodologies.

So these twin problems of perspective and language can frustrate any attempt to neatly define reality. There are also many other issues with Positivism (which I will not repeat in this thesis) but the key one in my view is how well it handles new observations and explanations, in other words, does it assist in the generation of knowledge or is it a barrier to learning?

In some ways Positivism can be regarded as the current Straw man of philosophical research. Every man can throw a stone with impunity and it has few committed defenders. However, this debate is restricted to the Philosophical community. The mainstream of popular thought accepts Positivism implicitly and even with the Scientific community it is only a small sub-group who regard this as of slightly more than academic interest.

Positivism (it would seem to me) has most value in the advancement of what has been termed "normal" science. It excels in areas where an existing theory requires validation, replication or improvement. It is (perhaps) less useful in the advancement of new theories (Anderson, 1983).

2.4.4 Relativism

In an earlier section, I touched on the limitations of Realism and I now wish to extend that argument and consider its antithesis, that of Relativism.   This is closely associated with the concept of Pluralism or the idea that there is in fact a multiplicity of realities rather than one.   It is rational and does not follow Idealist principles.

Relativism uses the Aristotelian concept of a priori models, Vorhabe (Heidegger, 1962) and Schema[82]   to explain how there can be different, yet equally valid accounts of reality depending on which constructional system is used (Kűng, 1993).   Yet it rejects the Greek idea that there is a duality between objects and their relations to humans (Rorty, 1996) but rather that there may be epistemic intermediaries between subject and object.

Logical positivism (e.g. Otto Neurath) had also previously made clear that any argument must be constructed linguistically and compared to other arguments or theories using a similar linguistic formulation, therefore the comparison is not between the two theories but their symbolic system or frame of reference.   Nelson Goodman in his seminal work – Ways of Worldmaking (1978) takes this position further and concludes that facts are "fabricated" by each of us according to our own conceptual framework.

The use of the word 'fabricated' suggests a level of freedom and that anything goes, but this was not Goodman's position. He firmly states that his relativism is radical and that it operates under rigorous constraints and is not open to unlimited licence (1984, p. 40).

There is no reality that we can objectively test against according to Goodman, we may have some right versions of the world, but we have nothing to test against other than

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[82] Social schemas are cognitive templates that shape perceptions, drive expectations as silent 'action scripts' and hypotheses (Fiske & Taylor, 1991)

other versions – which may or not be right versions.   Consequently, there is no version telling us how the world really is. The world as it really is, nor the universe as it really is, is not accessible to us. (Donato-Rodriguez, 2009)

One area that I find linguistically of interest is that of categorisation. Goodman shows that the way in which we view things is dependent on the pre-existing orders or categories or as he calls them "modes of organization" that our social context and culture have given us.   The example he uses to make elucidate this key point is how we perceive colour (Goodman, 1954). He uses the terms Green, Grue, Blue and Been to illustrate how our thinking is already pre-built into the world, rather than found.   I teach quite regularly in Vietnam and in that country there is no distinction between the words Blue or Green, "Xanh" is used for both.

2.4.4.1 Critical Relativism

Another paradigm is that of Critical Relativism, this is defined by Anderson (On Method in Consumer Research: A Critical Relativist Perspective, 1986); as recognising that there are multiple scientific objectives and different methods of achieving these objectives, hence a critical relativist will want to closely examine the credentials of the argument presented to him/her: "The mode of production, the criteria by which it is judged, the ideological and value commitments that inform its construction and the metaphysical beliefs that underlie its research program."

Relativism is not a major concern of most Marketeers, Anderson (1986) being a notable exception.   Marketing is essentially an applied normative sub-division of micro-economics (or Managerial Economics as Joel Dean (1951) would term it).   Hence, meta-physical discussions outwith the positivist model are seen as potentially interesting, but generally irrelevant, diversions.   Hunt (Should Marketing adopt

relativism ?, 1984) typifies this position with a straightforward demolition of any science that has no preference for the claims of medicine over palmistry.

There are a number of criticisms and refutations of relativism, the main one of which is that if there are indeed many right versions – then relativism itself may be only one of many (Siegel H. , 1987). Siegel terms this rebuttal that of "self-refutation". (Siegel H. , 1988). This is based on the requirement for what is termed "epistemic warrant" or in other words warranted knowledge. As any source of warranted knowledge can itself, be criticised as being only one of many possible right versions, then the base for intellectual knowledge is based on shifting sand. Bernstein (1983) termed this the "Cartesian Anxiety" whereby epistemology requires a clear foundation for further development of knowledge, if this is not forthcoming then any future construction of theory is liable to crash down like a deck of cards at any time – unless we are prepared to accept that any theory is just as good as any other. This to me, seems a circular argument, so whilst valid I find it of little value and I am prepared to accept the main tenets of relativism and thus must incorporate this into my own conception of critical theory. This, I shall endeavour to do in the next section.

Sidestepping a major objection to one's thesis, is a trick that the Sophists and Rhetoricians would see as a clever move. However, that is not my intent. My point is that philosophy is subjective and that there are no definitive answers. Once "facts" are established they then enter "normal" science and cease to be the rightful domain of philosophers. I offer one vignette below, which I hope illustrates my reluctance to accept this argument.

I was in a senior sales/marketing position in Corporate HQ and being interviewed by a young and highly intelligent Spanish Management Consultant on the issue of Sales effectiveness. He had a proposition on which he required my sign off. I listened to

what he said – which made great sense, but I felt that he had oversimplified the situation. I suggested we meet again so that I could properly think over what he had suggested. His model was based on UK data and being British, the idea to me was already (seductively) intuitively attractive. He told me that he had another meeting at 7pm and we would not be able to meet again until 8.30pm. . Reluctantly, I agreed and sat down and tried to reconcile his data with my own experience which suggested that he must be wrong.

I had already had a long day and when he arrived (late) I spent more time trying to establish if there were any inconsistencies with his theory. Apparently there was a senior board level meeting the next day and I was the last and only member of the management team yet to agree to the proposal. We spent an hour or more debating and still I was (strangely) unconvinced. Eventually, he suggested that if I was still reluctant to sign off we could meet again tomorrow morning. To this I eagerly acquiesced. Only to be told that he had a meeting already scheduled for 8am and therefore we would have to meet at 7am. As it was now already 11pm and I still had a half hour to drive home I decided add my signature, much against my better judgement, based on the fact that I was unable to come up with any cogent argument against his logic.

The power relationships in this case are quite complex (which as an ex-management consultant I can now clearly see). His Consulting Manager would be under pressure to produce results on a tight time frame to the DHL board which was a group that my own line manager sat on. They in turn would have been pressurising McKinsey's to complete the work as fast as possible. In this case I was caught in the middle.

A few days later, I had the opportunity to describe my failure with one of my colleagues Chris Wright (please refer to acknowledgments). He immediately understood my concern and pointed out the error in the logic (which was related to the differences in distance (stem time) between major cities and conurbations in the UK and in Spain). Sadly, this was all nugatory as the paper had been presented and accepted two days previously.

2.4.5 Reflection on 'Facts'

Many readers will immediately pick up on my failure to reject the deadline imposed and I would agree, in retrospect, that I should have protested. However, my line (Danish) manager was new in the job, insecure and had already accepted the timelines. I too was new in the position and under pressure to perform. For these reasons I recognise that in reality I had no option but to conform to expectations.

Personally I felt a failure. Due to my inability to cope with a lack of sleep and thus to match a

Siegel himself (Siegel H. , 2009) **would accept that in order to change my intuitive position I must be convinced by the quality and rationality of my adversary's reasons and argument, yet if my belief remains unshaken he will fail. This does not mean blind, religious belief trumps rational argument. And I must concede that I am unable to cite my intellectual, tacit or rational understandings to support my argument. Nonetheless I maintain my position.**

Insight

higher intellect so early the next morning.   Even now I feel this as a deep failure of physique, moral character and professionalism.

2.4.6 The Future of Critical Theory

It seems to me that the future of Philosophy and indeed Critical Theory depends on its ability to adapt to new thinking and to incorporate knowledge and techniques. However, essentially there also remains the edict to question and test these theories and reject them if necessary.   More fundamentally, the longer term interconnections between different disciplines are capable of developing the types of fluid intelligence and higher order thinking that is necessary for human knowledge to progress (Max-Neef, 2005).   As somewhat of an eclectic it is perhaps not surprising that I hold this view, which indeed I do most passionately.

This position is of course probably not entirely due to chance.   Whilst at High School in Scotland, I enjoyed a far broader form of education than my former friends 'South of the Border'.   The Scots educational system permits, nay encourages, the study of a variety of arts and science courses at "Higher"[83] level.   As a result, I was able to study English, Geography, Biology, Physics and Chemistry to the end of my secondary education.   Hence I am naturally pre-disposed to the concept of inter or trans-disciplinary methods, I would recommend this broad format mode of Education to any Minister.

Wisdom can be characterised as a level of higher order thinking which anticipates the likely outcomes of decisions in practice (Schwarz, 2011).   In order to achieve this, a number of key skills or visionary orientations are required: spatially across contexts and

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[83] Scottish Highers are roughly the equivalent of a one year A level course.

geography, temporarily across past, present and future (where Action Research has a rôle) as well as a broad and inclusive understanding (Izak, 2013). A broad based education system has much to offer in this respect.

The essence of Critical theory I feel, will always remain. Socratic Questioning, Fluid Intelligence, etc can all provide grist to the mill and as long as there are emergent new theories, new methods and new paradigms critical theory will have something to say. As such it fulfils a valuable rôle in both society and the development of knowledge, epistemology and philosophy.

2.4.7 Philosophical thought and Critical Theory

The purpose of the preceding sections of my literature review was to provide some backcloth to critical theory overlaying other schools of Philosophical thought and searching for commonalities or major points of difference. In common with Schopenhauer, I find that there is indeed much in common between Eastern and Western Philosophies although the starting positions are quite different. Phronesis or action with moral guidance is identified as key to my personal brand map. I examined (briefly) the merits of Positivism and find that its primary functionality lies in the field of what is commonly referred to as 'normal' science but it is not an appropriate methodology for this thesis. Finally, I attest to the value of inter-disciplinary research as an adjunct to Critical Theory as this provides a wider perspective from which to construct a Socratic dialogue.

My next section takes my theoretical constructs and weaves my own hermeneutic thread through that which I have experienced and attempts (by way of reflection) to interpret my meta-data matrix. I also take a more detailed view of the methodology and theory of Action Research.

2.5. The Career of a Professional Marketeer[84]

This section recapitulates to some extent what has been covered in earlier sections, but is essentially a precursor to my concluding Chapter (Chapter 4).

I aim to provide an overview on a critical and reflective practitioner heuristic perspective of the career of a Professional Marketeer.   An action research methodology, using my career as a Marketeer with a number of national and international public limited companies and non-profit making organisations is used as the basis for this research.   The epistemological background to Action Research is described and a description of the research approach is given.   This is supplemented with some background information which can be divided into three key phases or time periods.

In traditional (empirical) research the normal approach is to research other people.   In the case of Action Research, the key is self-reflection.   This idea was originally put forward by Donald Schön (1983).   The development of my thinking over the course of my career is similar in technique to that described by Jean McNiff (2010) who started work as a researcher/consultant in Ireland working in the field of Education.   She used Action Research to examine how she might improve her practice as a teacher.   In my case, my Career as a professional Marketeer has already run over three decades.   To paraphrase Michelle Parker (2013) - Practitioner reflection, growing our knowledge, improving our practice over a period of time shifts the way you understand and do the work.

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[84] The original version of this chapter was published in 2012, Actual Problems of Economics, Scientific Economic Journal, Dent. M. & Wong Sek Khin E. (2012) Marketing Action Research: The career of a professional marketeer. No.6 (132), pp360-366.

In this thesis, I describe how I developed through practice and experience in certain organisations at certain points in time. This may in turn has helped me to better understand my own genesis and use this information to become a better communicator and lecturer in the field of Marketing having reflected on and learned from past experiences.

The three key Phases refer to my experiences in the UK and Belgium (roughly 1970 to 2005), Latin America & the USA (2000 to 2001) and Malaysia (2006 to date).

The approach I have taken is that of the Living Thesis as described by Wong (2003). In an area where there has been little prior Action Research in the field of International Business.

The Research Question that I seek to answer can be broken down into three:

- Understand the rationality and efficacy of my practice

- My own understanding of these practices

- The situations in which these practices were carried out.

2.5.1 Self-identity

The Author tends to refer to himself and sign documents with the initials "mmd". My first employer (the AA) worked closely with a the Auditing practice and Management Consultancy Coopers & Lybrand and one of my most interesting projects in my formative years was working with C&L on a self-catering holiday lodge concept in Scotland. After leaving Business School I joined their practice in Gutter Lane, London EC4. Consultants internally were referred to by their initials, the head of the Economics division was Professor Christopher D Foster a.k.a. CDF. My middle name is Murray so I was referred to as MMD (Michael Murray Dent). For a variety of reasons I liked this simple and concise form of branding and have adopted it as my *nom de plume* ever since.

The issue of identity is key to understanding as explained by Graham John van Tuyl in his PhD thesis (Van Tuyl, 2010):

> *"The Thesis contains many references to "identity". I was (am) an Engineer, and that indicates a linear, reductionist and rational mind-set. I also had a very argumentative personality, which was part of my upbringing. People could and did see me as a difficult and argumentative person, a "polarizer" between groups. I would speak the truth wherever I would see fit, without thinking about the consequences and the hurt it would cause other people"*

The idea of referring to a person as a brand is not a particularly new one, a brand being what passes as "knowledge" based on thoughts, beliefs, experiences, feelings and images. I have explained this in greater detail in Chapter 6 by means of the Brand Map.

Whilst this is primarily a self-reflective emic study, the academic contribution comes from the inductive generalisation to a wider context. More specifically, international business managers and business academics can improve their practice and/or

understanding. With the accelerating pace of globalisation it is likely that the issues and problems that the Author has encountered will also increase in frequency. Every situation is indeed different but patterns do emerge and generalisations of efficacious actions can be made.

In terms of actions that would have increased the probability of more satisfactory outcomes, there are probably many different tactical moves that would have been more useful or successful. Similarly, I can see many strategic moves that in retrospect, look questionable. This research helps to define a framework and methodology which offers others an opportunity to capture these learning experiences into their own realities and hence improve their professional practice.

The approach described is that of a single case study based on the research philosophy of critical theory (with an objective ontology and subjective epistemology).

More fundamentally, this is a Qualitative study. The potential pitfall for any reviewer is to conceive of any statistical generalisation as a method of generalising the results of the case (Janesick, 1998). This is because cases are not sampling units and should not be chosen for this reason. In my view, this is a single case study which elicits a number of different perspectives on a number of different events. I will generate a number of responses but the objective is clearly not to subject this data to Quantitative analysis, however attractive this may seem. That is not to say that case studies cannot provide generalisable conclusions, particularly in the area of business (Lukka & Kasanen, 1995). Action research was described by Gummesson (2000) as "the most demanding and far reaching method of doing case study research" and provides ten cogent arguments to support his contention. These arguments primarily relate to how action research promotes a holistic understanding of a problem, an acceptance of change and a predisposition to real time adjustment of both methods and solutions.

I did seriously consider a Sampling methodology of Homogeneous Snowballing (Creswell, 2008) and indeed this may be a possible, additional route I could take in future research.   In Homogeneous sampling certain people are selected because they share a similar trait or characteristic.   In this case, these would be people who had either worked with me in the various international companies that I have worked for, Market Research companies, Advertising Agencies, PR Agencies etc. who I have also worked with and some Competitors (often those that left the company I worked for to join the opposition).   The Snowball sampling methodology is generally used in situations where the researcher does not know the best person to speak to and respondents are asked to recommend other individuals to study.   In my case, it would be simply because I do not have a universal data base with every possible past work colleague listed.   However, the magic of today's social media allows messages to be relayed to many different degrees of freedom in almost an instant.   The old adage that everyone on the planet is connected to everyone else by at most 7 different connections[85] is true a fortiori nowadays on the sub-ether.

2.5.2 Validity & Reliability Issues

Similarly, as time moves on memories and recollections both fade.   This unfortunately I have no choice but to accept.   Looking back through time must necessarily distort the view as any History PhD would attest. I must therefore, accept the criticism of Harding (1986, p. 201): "The insights of Freud and Marx have taught us that the accuracy of our autobiographies is limited by what we select as significant, by what we have inadvertently forgotten, by what is too painful to recall, and by what we cannot know

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[85] Recent research on Facebook suggests that the number 7 is fairly accurate.

about the forces operating in our natural/social surroundings that shaped our earlier experiences".

However, the process of Triangulation through a combination of data sources (e-mails, diaries, PowerPoint presentations, toolkits etc.)[86] have helped to add rigour, breadth and depth, although not necessarily validation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Triangulation is more likely to support any finding or conclusion, if it is based on several different sources. This is achieved by looking for corroboration in the responses of different work actors (both colleagues and competitors) on the same episode. As an alternative to triangulation Bob Dick (1997) uses the term dialectic to refer to the cross comparison of data obtained from different sources within the same cycle of action research.

There is no doubt, however, that qualitative research of any description must bear the inquisition of validity and answer it confidently and with sound reason. This paranoia is neatly encapsulated in the title of Denis Phillips article 'Why the Worry about the Warrant will not Wane. (1987). In this article, Philips suggests that whilst it is impossible to demonstrate truth, the key test is that of believability backed up with reason. With this backing, we can reasonably suppose that the arguments proposed are indeed, for the most part, true. I hesitate to apply Wilfredo Pareto's 80-20 rule in this regard as I suspect that more than 10% dissonance between the readers own experience, understanding or beliefs will instigate rejection. In many areas of management 80% accuracy is regarded as good enough for Government work and indeed success. Like a striker in a football team it is acceptable to miss quite often as long as you do score when it counts. Psychological theory (in which I am no expert) and Economic theory would both suggest that in many cases a shift of less than 10% in any direction for many people for various factors is not of major significance. Indeed, in DHL we were

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[86] See Appendix C for examples of some of these materials.

commended for our strategy of small incremental changes in price rather than larger less acceptable ones[87].

I am not sure how I would measure it, but I feel a worthy topic which would unite both Qualitative and Quantitative researchers would be to research what proportion of research (qualitative) must be believable in order for it to be accepted as believable by your peers? I suspect we have a new rule – the 9/91 rule. If the test of acceptability is believability, then most academics will not accept concepts or ideas that are significantly outwith their prevailing schemata. This statistic, I feel sure would sit well with Pareto and is consistent with those of the views of Kuhn, (The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 1970) inter alia. More importantly, I feel sure that it will also strike resonance with my readers…

But on reflection I observe an inconsistency. I am applying the 9/91 rule to qualitative research. But is this in actuality any different to quantitative research? The (positivistic) history of Copernicus, Darwin et al within the natural sciences suggests that exactly the same criteria apply. It is not so much the inherent a priori "validity" of theory that counts – rather it is the number of supporters, ambivalents and opponents (and how quickly the opponents die out) that actually determines the acceptability (or "validity") of a new theory. Marketing already possesses a model to describe this behaviour within members of a target market, yet the same model can be applied to members of a political party, scientific community or religion. It is called the conversion model and broadly divides the population into Strongly Loyal, Loyal, Floating, Disloyal and Strongly Disloyal (using a Likert Scale nomenclature).

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[87] As many readers may recognise this bears strong resemblance to the tale of the frog in the pan, who fails to act on slow successive increases in the temperature of the water surrounding him until it reaches boiling point and his death.

The case study approach clearly has limitations but there is support for individual research projects on the basis that theories that do not run with the popular scientific view do assist other researchers who may be following a false trail. Epistemic knowledge is built both individually and by groups (Mayo-Wilson, Zollman, & Danks, 2011) and hence, this suggests reliability considerations between the two may differ. Goodin (2006) suggests that greater numbers of research case studies even when biased may produce significant benefits. The search for truth and knowledge ultimately depend on the generation of testable theories, observations and case studies. It would actually be foolish to suggest that my observations are accurate or in some mystical way "more correct" than that which has gone before, indeed taking Medicine as an example of neo-positivism we can see that rigorously checked and peer reviewed articles which have individually been cited more than 1,000 times each have a 33% chance of being subsequently refuted.

Dr. John Ioannidis, a Greek epidemiologist estimates that roughly half of published papers in the field will eventually be found to be wanting[88]. Cleary I have no intention of intentional bias, but as I have already made clear, intentional or otherwise, bias is unavoidable in research of this kind. Nonetheless, my research adds to the pool of knowledge which provides future researchers with other avenues to pursue. Healy & Perry (2000) and Golafshani (2003) would I feel concur with this perspective. They do not require a test of truth within the realism paradigm, according to them validity is derived from multiple perceptions of a single reality supplemented by triangulation of several data sources. Peter Reason (2006, p. 199) rejects the notion of validity completely as he sees this as embedded within the positivistic tradition with the underlying assumption that there is only *one* validity.

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[88] Journal of the American Medical Association, quoted in The Economist (Scientific Accuracy & Statistics, 2005)

Moustakas (1990) sees validity in heuristic research as related to quality, not 'quality' within the engineering or TQM definition of the word (i.e. fitness for purpose), but more in the interface between the object (i.e. this research) and the observer (i.e. your good self, gentle reader). Guba & Lincoln (1989) termed this (somewhat unimaginatively in my view) as the 'quality' or 'goodness' of the research. Bullough & Pinnegar (2001), looking specifically at quality in self-study research, introduced "significance" and also whether the research engaged the reader's imagination. Capobianco & Feldman (2006) followed Reason (2003, p. 108) with a tighter definition which captures the coherence, alignment and consistency of the research method: "A coherent body of goals, objectives, and methods aimed at recognising a level of competence associated with reflection and understanding..."

Far be it for me to introduce yet another definition of Quality into the language, yet I can identify the words that seem to me to encapsulate my understanding of the word. Significance and coherence seem the most relevant, but I am also seduced by the idea of engaging the reader's imagination. Engaging with the target audience will fire neurons across synapses and make it more relevant to them. Without clear and engaging communication it is likely that the significance of this type of research will be lost.

Peter Reason (2006) sees Quality in inquiry coming from awareness of and transparency about the choices available at each stage of the inquiry. Rorty (as might be expected) has an even more iconoclastic perspective; "One should stop worrying about whether what one believes is well grounded and start worrying about whether one has been imaginative enough to think up interesting alternatives to one's present beliefs". (Rorty R. , Philosophy and social hope, p. 34).

Notwithstanding the vocabulary, it is in this light of "Quality" that I would wish my work to be judged.

2.5.3 Methodology

The strength of the Critical theory approach is that it enables researchers to examine the processes and outcomes of power relations, the weakness is that it is challenging to achieve consensus amongst respondents.   Emancipatory values matter; a positivist's rôle is seen as an explorer who cannot influence the results, hence the research remains (apparently) value free.   Critical theory, on the other hand,[89] accepts that the way that we, as researchers, analyse and interpret empirical data results in contamination by way of the researcher's socio-cultural background and sensory experience.

Clearly, I need to be aware of the risk of Naturalistic Generalisation (Stake, 1995) whereby people look for patterns that explain their own experience as well as events in the world around them. This is probably the most potent threat to the validity of this thesis. Hopefully, the triangulation I refer to later will, to some extent, mitigate this risk, but as yet again, I am the final arbiter of what goes in and what stays out of this paper, I have to admit to grounds for attack on this point, Maxwell (2005) would classify this as Researcher Bias.   And the only way mitigation that I can offer is to clearly identify the ways I in which I could be wrong.

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[89] Apparently when presenting to the DHL UK Board, I was well known for using the common Economist's catchphrase "on the other hand".   On one occasion, the Managing Director (in frustration) announced that he would like to cut off one of my hands - so I could just give some straightforward and unequivocal advice – what should we actually do ? Somewhat shocked, I later found that the original phrase was attributed to Harry S Truman, a former President of the United States.

So, we can summarise by saying that even although critical theory has a number of problematic issues it is an interesting and relatively new approach to management research as it provides a framework to examine the political nature of management and organisations. It thus, provides a standpoint from which to critique management processes and institutions.

2.5.4 Application & Reflection

Unfortunately, I feel that methodologically, culturally and philosophically I am ridden with bias. I have already admitted that I do, indeed, have a mission. But, I do have a voice which I hope the reader considers worth at least a cursory glance. I think my voice is jaundiced. But not with bitterness or regret, I have very much enjoyed my life on the treadmill.[90]

Figure 2.4   Life on the Treadmill

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[90] A young consultant's life is gruelling. A typical week starts before dawn on Monday, with a rush to the airport and a flight to wherever the client is based. A typical brain-for-hire can expect to stay in hotels at least three nights a week, gorging on minibar peanuts and glumly texting a distant lover. "It's quite normal to spend a year living out of a suitcase," sighs one London-based consultant. (Powerpoint Rangers: The life of a young consultant, 2013)

I did indeed find it hard, but I made a point to tell my team to enjoy the experiences and if directed to travel overseas to take advantage of the opportunity to enrich one's cultural exposure. As a result, I took in trips to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, the Prado in Madrid, Norwich Cathedral, Moscow Chess Club, football matches in the Bombonera (Buenos Aires), Maracana (Sao Paulo) and Azteca Stadium (Mexico City DF), and a visit to a Township in Johannesburg. I hope and believe that I imparted some of this (fun) work ethic to the teams that I worked with. On any trip that was of two to three days length (as unfortunately so many of mine were) I would try to build in an extra day's leave if not a weekend.

In terms of what I would like to contribute, "the Socratic project of creating a better world through the use of liberating human reasoning" (Wong E. S., 2012) seems a noble cause. Social Justice may be a rather lofty ideal, some contribution to work, life balance sounds more pragmatic, if prosaic. But, as I have previously intimated I do have a communication mission. So, what is it that I feel so driven to promulgate? It is linked to the theories of Employee (and hence Customer) satisfaction and Loyalty. Customer Loyalty is seen as the driver of corporate profitability, be it Harley Davidson, Starbucks, Bentley or Levi Jeans. But there is an imbalance that few researchers have examined and that is the bi-lateral relationship between employee and employer.

Some studies in Japan have identified that there are two distinct forms of employer loyalty; one to the company (or possibly to the brand) and the second to your line manager or mentor (not necessarily the same). It is likely that the relationship between the line manager and the employee is reciprocated (not necessarily to the same degree, however). But the Brand is essentially soulless and loyalty may well prove to be a one-way street in times of difficulty, to which numerous colleagues of mine at DHL would

attest (e.g. following the mass redundancies at DHL US amongst the Couriers in favour of the (unionised) Airborne Express Drivers).[91] As might be expected, this results in a feeling of injustice, the breaking of trust and subsequent employee de-motivation (Cameron, Kim, & Whetten, 1987), (Cameron, Freeman, & Mishra, 1991), (Cameron, Freeman, & Mishra, 1993), (Freeman & Cameron, 1993) & (Cameron K. , 1998).

The point of dishonesty is where an organisation falsely commits to certain Corporate Values (encapsulated in its Mission and/or Vision Statement) and actively attempts to capture the loyalty of their work force. This is deception of the worst order as it builds trust and commitment over a period of many years and then can be withdrawn at a moment's notice, the protection (or loyalty) of one's direct line manager notwithstanding. Late on in one's career is not the time to discover the deception.

2.5.5 Conclusions on my own Philosophy

This chapter has provided an introduction into some of my own personal philosophy, psychology and character, as such it serves as a precursor for my concluding chapter. I have explained the issue of self-identity and branding and also reminded myself of some the methodological pitfalls that I must be aware of when continuing my course of hermeneutic reflection.

I have also (briefly) discussed the issue of loyalty to an organization. This should be a two way street, and yet this is not possible as the organization has no soul – only those working within it have this attribute. The strength of feeling to an organization can be fantastically strong. So strong in fact, that a recent editor of the New York Post was

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[91] I have written more on this in the National University of Singapore/HELP University Case Study series The DHL/Airborne Express Acquisition (2013), see Appendix B.

motivated to obtain a Tattoo of the logo of her newspaper. It is unlikely, following her dismissal that her feelings towards the company will be anywhere near so positive. And yet this is a fate which necessarily awaits many of us.

The next section (2.5) continues into more depth on the theory of action research and overlays this onto my own lived experiences and various techniques for further analysis.

2.6 The Marketeer Experiences[92]

This section of my literature review identifies action research conceptual developments in the study of a Marketeer's experience involving a turn from differentiation to de-differentiation of everyday life. That is to say, not merely analysing past experiences, but also trying to look beyond the analytical and probe more deeply into the feelings, motivations and more tacit explanations. The epistemological background to Action Research is described and an initial description of the research approach is given. This is supplemented with some background information on how the author's self-reflective thinking can be used as a vehicle for this research. Thus, it is suggested that contemporary conceptualisations of this action research subject correspond to the so-called "reflective professional action research" theorising in the social sciences.

This section (2.5) consist of a literature review of reflective practice and the philosophy of this methodology, a discussion of this research methodology, and thirdly, the "Michael M. Dent" case study using the Living Thesis Paradigm in my explications of tacit knowledge.

I was actually part of an Action Research study many years before I heard of the term. I had heard of Delphic forecasting and the approach that was used by the RoMI group at Cranfield University in the early 2000s struck me (as a humble participant) as a robust methodology. DHL Express was a keen supporter of Cranfield University; Firstly, through the links with Professor Martin Christopher who ran a few advanced Logistics courses and latterly more general Senior Management development courses which by luck I also attended. In the intervening years I had picked up on the Cranfield approach to Market Segmentation (McDonald & Dunbar, 2004) which served me well in gaining

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[92] The majority of the content of this chapter has been published in Actual Problems of Economics, Scientific Economic Journal, Dent.M & Wong Sek Khin E (2012) The Marketeer experiences: Action research conceptual developments. No.7 (133), pp 324-330. Partly for this reason the Chapter title reprises that of the original article.

the position of Segmentation Manager for the Europe & Africa Marketing Department in the newly formed Global Coordination Centre in Brussels. Serendipity struck again in a variety of ways to place me in pole position on my return to the UK to sit in on a new cross industry group. But more of this later.

2.6.1 The Reflective Practitioner

Schön (1987) and Moon (2000) both describe the reflective practitioner as one who is simply thoughtful about his or her own practices, though this is not the whole of the discussion. Reflective practice requires the mental processes of reflection, which may be characterised by "being reflective." Schön and Moon also speak of a reflective practitioner, a person with a self-image as a facilitator, recognising the uncertainty within a profession, one who has the knowledge base of a member of his/her profession, and is aware of the problems that need to be resolved in any professional practice. To succeed, the reflective practitioner deals with this uncertainty by putting client relationships at the centre of his/her professional practices with attempts to develop negotiated shared meanings and understandings as a joint process, all of which require reflection.

Similarly, Proctor (1993) states that reflective practice is the process of critically and rationally treating their professional history, evaluating what has occurred, and then using the results of this process with the sum of their professional knowledge, including technical and ethical aspects, to tackle new and other situations. These critical elements have been widely associated with reflective practices and often taken to be the main purpose of reflection (Smyth, 1989).

In similar vein to Smyth's ideology, but dealing with education, Wong (2004) believes that in a reflective professional education, the activities of teaching often need to be set

in their historical, political, theoretical, and moral contexts, if not, then this turns reflective teaching into an imperfect technical process. In contrast, reflection is the "active and militant" tool that enables that contextualisation (Smyth, op.cit), and as a consequence, this "technical-rational" education fails to provide the elements necessary to enable doctoral candidates to develop the heuristics, or the necessary skills of problem-solving by trial and error, needed to deal with the real world chaos that surrounds all research.

Patton (2002) states that the use of human experiences as sources and resources is the foundation of heuristic enquiry, and this hit-and-miss form of enquiry begins the processes of understanding the topic, finding its essences and meanings. However, this process requires an intensity of investigation to establish a quality based result founded upon personal experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This personalised approach establishes the necessary factor of rigour, but not that of duplication, because through insights, reflections, and mutual experiential explanations as research components are unique for a time and place.

In what Jack Whitehead terms the "living theory paradigm" (1993, p. 69), he argues that researcher and co-researcher dialogues are new ways action researchers represent the living aspect about practice. This approach celebrates a living form of practitioner educational theory, which is open-ended and contains an intention to create something better Edward Wong (2003) (Wong & Choong, 2010). Jack Whitehead (1998) also asserts that including the "I" and embracing subjectivity is essential to research within this paradigm. In addition, Whitehead (2002) exhorts individuals to not be silent, or hold back their perspectives or try to struggle dishonestly in order to fit their private world with their public face. Individuals must be aware of their subjective selves by

not engaging in the processes of denial or by conforming to oppressive domination concerning gender, race, or differently cultured selves.

Lomax & Parker (1995, p. 302) also suggest that "action researchers display their own personal signatures", thus celebrating their own unique, personal and subjective strengths of their work (see Figure 23 later in this Chapter).

The living thesis paradigm compels the researcher to document any conflicts he or she experiences, with their internal self, and externally as they present themselves to the world, and especially their feelings when both their internal and external selves are in harmony. This is lived theory, as described in Whitehead (1993) & (2009) as a set of comments arguing that one's espoused theory ideally should be consistent with a person's lived theory. Whitehead further states that living theory's explanations are not embodied in the individual's life forces, but an individual contains an intention to create something in the future, based on that person's goals or values and all controlled within a variable action plan. Hence, this theory is an explanation, which makes sense of the present in terms of an evaluation of the past with an intention to change some aspect of one's own practice, or the world in the future (Wong E. S., 2003). Oddly, the use of the first person "I" in some research writing is not recommended, while in Action Research, it is almost a trademark of this paradigm.

To summarise much of the above and endeavour to position my research more accurately on the chart I show in the diagram below how four different approaches can be envisaged depending on whether the focus of the research, is organisationally or Researcher focused. This is adapted from Coghlan & Brannick (2010, p. 103).

Researcher & Organizational Interaction

	High Organization Focus	Low Organization Focus
Low Researcher Focus	Classic Action Research Internal Consutling	Traditional Research, Surveys, ethnography, case studies
High Researcher Focus	Large scale transformational change	Reflective study of professional practice

Source: Coghlan & Brannick (2010)

Figure 2.5 Researcher and Organizational Interaction

The two top boxes relate to a Low Researcher research focus, and the two boxes on the left relate to studies with a High Organizational focus. The reflective study of professional practice (circled above) demonstrates a High Researcher focus and a low level of interest in the organization.

En passant, I will also at this point add, that it is because I am operating in the lower right hand box that I am making known the names of some of the companies I have worked for. These organizations provide a backcloth for my research but are not intrinsically the focus of it. There has also been some time lapse since I moved from the Corporate world to that of academia, consequently a number of my previous companies no longer exist. I have of course, endeavoured to protect the identities of individuals, particularly in cases where my reflections could paint them in a non-complimentary light.

2.6.2 Lived Experiences

The purpose of this section is to apply a research-based examination using an action research approach with reflective professional practice in the evaluation of an explication of tacit knowledge. The aim of this research is to develop an understanding of explicating tacit knowledge by employing an ethnographic research methodology. This is the foundation of the emphasis of the researcher's responses, thoughts, and experiences.   With this foundation, the researcher gleans warranted assertions from his own lived experiences as well as from lived experiences other colleagues.

Two simple questions can be applied:

- Can you describe one event or activity in which Michael Dent was involved which worked particularly well and one event/activity that worked out particularly badly in your view?
- What (in both cases) could have been done to improve the outcome?

It is generally accepted in Qualitative Research circles that highly structured and standardised questions are not desirable, whereas hypothetical questions in which the respondent is asked to speculate can be far more efficacious.   It would be possible to subsequently follow these questions with some additional Socratic questioning. However, this then leads into further ethical and methodological swamps" where chaos and confusion reigns" (Schön D. A., 1983, p. 39).

This research is essentially Qualitative, that is to say it is an emic (or insiders) perspective in which the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis.   Qualitative research primarily employs an inductive research strategy (Merriam, 2001).   Since Qualitative research focuses on process, meaning and understanding, the product of such a study is richly descriptive.   Words and pictures

rather than numbers are used to communicate the key learning points. The methodology is that of a longitudinal case study (Stake, 1995) over a period of four decades.

Utilising Yin's (2003) typology of Case Studies (of which there are six types in a two by three matrix) this is clearly a Single Case Study rather than Multiple Case (the other three boxes are Exploratory, Descriptive or Causal). In this respect, it seeks to understand how behaviour and/or processes are influenced by and in themselves influence context. The boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident. This is not, however, Narrative Research (Creswell, 2008) as it clearly has an applied focus (how do I improve my practice?). However, it does possess significant elements of Grounded Theory (Strauss & Glaser, 1967) whereby there is a procedure to generate theories that explains at a broad conceptual level a series of actions in the life of Michael Dent (which occurs over a period of time). Therefore, as a Case study, it can be regarded as either Causal (after Yin) or Evaluative (according to Leedy (1997)).

Grounded Theory Methodology is a "general method of comparative analysis" to discover theory with four central criteria, i.e. work (generality), relevance (understanding), fit (valid), and modifiability (control). This methodology can be applied to both qualitative as well as quantitative data (Glaser & Strauss 1967 (Scholz & Tietje, 2002)). It will answer the question of "What was going on in an area" by generating either a substantive or formal theory.

I have also described this research as utilising an ethnographic approach. Ethnography is a methodology commonly used to study particular societies or groupings of people. It aims to understand their language, their motivations and their experiences by means of observation, frequently participant observation. In my case, I am both the researcher

and a participant so, the question arises is this an ethnographic or an auto-ethnographic study? As I am hence, "repositioned" as a subject of inquiry this does indeed become auto-ethnographic (Crawford, 1996).

I do draw a distinction, however, between auto-ethnography and auto-biography. This thesis is not in any way intended to be a post facto rationalisation of past actions to relieve internal stress caused by cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957). I do recognise that some of my past actions have not been consistent with my own internal values. Additionally, I also recognise that I do have an innate ability to block off unpleasant episodes in my life and that this may be a barrier to successful reflection.

2.6.3 Conceptualisations of the Marketeer's Experience

Developments discussed here exemplify the incorporation of a Case Study with one single case (the author's self) being the focus of the research. Specifically, practices of deconstruction are illustrated in the first two developments, which focus on the core values, personality traits, value position and inner & outer directed values. Hence, there are several different events over a number of years used to paint this picture. In addition, there are many observations from a number of different people with whom the author has interacted over the years. This is not a Descriptive nor an Explanatory case study (to use the typology of Leedy op.cit.) but an Evaluative case study as it is used to evaluate the efficacy of the course of action taken at any one time and investigated (through peer review and reflection) as to how the outcome could have been improved.

2.6.4 The Brand Map
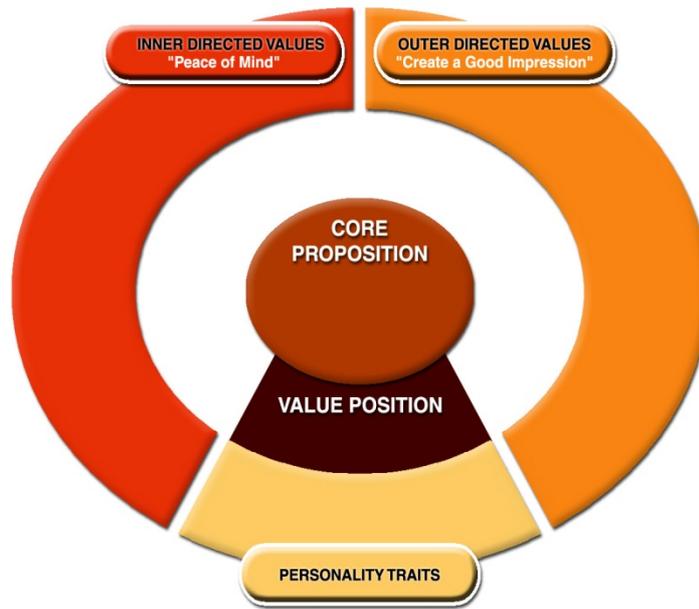
Figure 2.6 The Brand Map

The Brand Map is a succinct (one page) way of encapsulating the positioning of a brand in the market place.   A brand can be a product, a service, an ideal or a person.   Its main purpose is communication but it can also be used as a tool for analysis.   The main areas are the Market Definition, Target Market and desired Customer Response, Core Values, Functional & Emotional reasons to buy (or support, or employ etc.), Value position and desired Personality shifts.   As such it is also a strategy document as it states a preference (or choice) of one option over another.

2.6.4.1 Core Values

The Core Values of an individual are partly shaped by experience and partly based on personality profile. They are those core beliefs that the individual holds central to their very existence. Over the course of this research the author examined how these brand values evolved and indeed how they have changed significantly over the period of his corporate career. The core proposition is what is crafted in order to present the product to market. Fundamental dissonance between Core Values and Core Proposition create many difficulties and are impossible to maintain successfully in the long term. Nagel (1986, p. 198) has an interesting perspective on this, essentially, internal aspect of personality. He positions the interested party as observing themselves as if from the *outside*. In other words how others see us. Hence; if we find our self-external perception to be incongruous then we become alienated from our lives. By our own admission we become inauthentic. As Kant has told us, this responsibility to act true to the character and personality that we ourselves have assumed becomes an existential annihilation of our id if we fail in this respect.

2.6.4.2 Brand Identity

As can be seen on the diagram, there is no place for my Identity, what Freud might refer to as the inner self. Part of this category can be said to be covered by the Core Proposition and the Core Values, and to some extent also by Personality Traits. However, one deficiency of the Brand Map is that it is used primarily to examine the *external* perception of the company's or individual's reputation rather than an examination of the soul. I have already related how I tend to use my initials "mmd" as part of my external identity and I claim to be Scottish. However, part of my identity also relates to my affiliation with Sheffield Wednesday (see Section 1.12 Reflections).

Some of this is for external consumption – but much is also embedded deep within me, a Global traveller[93] born in Scotland but forged in Sheffield[94], tempered in Europe and then sharpened in the Americas and South East Asia.   A more apposite descriptor could be made on 'Planet Earth'.   These characteristics are thus, also used by me as "Substantiators" of my desired perceived image as a Global professional as well as providing some solid footing for my own inner brand identity.   As one of the Professors at my current University has put it, "There is a need to be grounded in one's own 'transcendent Self' for stability.   ....Established in one's true transcendental Self beyond the ego in Being, one never feels threatened by outside influences" (Gurubatham, 2013)**.**

[95]

Figure 2.7   Owl Logo as used by the Author

2.6.4.3 Personality Traits

Personality traits are those characteristics (good and bad) that typify the brand.   They can consciously be worked on to try and change but this can be extremely difficult if the

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[93] Stravaigin in Scots.

[94] Sheffield is frequently referred to as the 'Steel City' on account of its association with the manufacture of high quality steel.

[95] My Sister Fiona is an artist living in Maidenhead (www.fionadent.com) and she painted this for me a few years ago to encapsulate my connections with Scotland, Sheffield Wednesday, London Business School – the logo also refers to Minerva's Owl, and the gaining of my Commercial Pilot's licence.

change is dissonant to preferred behaviour.   And it is only through behaviour that they can be changed – relying on the perceptions of others.

- Positive attributes can be built on or re-inforced or new ones sought.   Negative attributes are best minimised (or ideally lost) and this can always be achieved by a large scale change in social/work circle.   Changing continent for a new work position allows opportunities to do just that.   Family circles are far more fixed – although they too change over time, for example one brother in law may be exchanged for another as one's own or siblings marital circumstances change.

- Brand attributes that perhaps have been forced on me, would be Bounceability (Always look on the Bright side of Life[96]) and Perseverance ("Monsieur Dent – vous etes Forte" {Alliance Française, Belgium}).   Negative ones would be Arrogance and Selfishness.   Negative attributes are nearly always the most difficult to shift – and in the course of life and career, probably the most important ones to work on.   Job promotions are often based not so much on Strengths as on the absence of Weaknesses.

One of the personality traits that is most important in international business is the approach used when faced with disagreement by a person or group.   The three main options are the adversarial, consensual or dialectic.   I believe there is no one ideal approach, and much depends on the situation.   I am not an enthusiast of the Adversarial method, although, I do use it on occasion. Consensual or Dialectic methods are more my preferred operating style.   But I will consider very carefully which one is most appropriate before taking any position.   I am sure this must be one of the early lessons

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[96] Or as the famous Scottish philosopher Professor Francis Hutcheson (1724) would have put it "the bright Side of Humane Nature".

in diplomacy. The situation (for me) depends on three factors.

Firstly, the relative Power positions, if the person/group I am dealing with is in control and I have to persuade them around to my point of view then, Dialectics or Consensual will be my preferred approach. If I am in control it is more likely to be Consensual.

Secondly, the Urgency/Importance of the decision. If something has to be done immediately I might elect for Adversarial (possibly with a footnote to self to explain my rationale to the group later). If it is neither important nor urgent, I will probably select the Dialectic approach - content in the knowledge that I don't really care either way.

Thirdly, my own thirst for knowledge. If I think that I might learn something, I will employ the dialectical option (see Appendix A). If I am not an expert in the area, then I am very unlikely to take up a strong position on something that I could easily be proved wrong on. However, if I am debating something that I know a lot about with someone who is a learner in the area I might not want to engage in fruitless (for me) discussion. The only caveat here, is that a strong adversarial position may not convince my counterpart and I might have to repeat the exercise some time later.

In my view, the best way to log these experiences are in the form of meeting notes. These need to be built up on a person by person, group by group basis. What works in one situation, will not necessarily work well with other people. The meeting notes should include some references as to which approaches worked well. I am not sure that a tabular format is of much benefit, but one way might be to combine the Power/Knowledge factors on one axis and Urgency/Importance on the other, hence providing a 2 by 2 matrix. One could then possibly populate the table with

observations using a 3 colour code system - Green/Successful, Amber/Mixed Results and   Red/Failure.

Over time it would be possible to determine where most of Red/Ambers are occurring.

Power/Knowledge	Important/Urgent	Not Important& not Urgent
High	Adversarial	Consensual/Dialectic
Low	Consensual/Dialectic	Dialectic

Figure 2.8 Adversarial or Dialectic Approach matrix

A further area of behaviour to be considered, is that of preferred style of management and leadership.   I am quite clearly of the belief that teamwork is of far greater import than individual talent.   I admire the team building capabilities of Jock Stein (Celtic), Brian Clough (Nottingham Forest) and Alex Ferguson (whilst at Aberdeen) [97] who have demonstrated that fairly mediocre teams moulded in the right way and effectively motivated can meet more expensively resourced teams and recover from psychologically damaging setbacks and yet still prevail.   Indeed I often give these examples in classes when discussing leadership, although with the exception of Alex Ferguson few of my students have ever heard of them.

The scientific evidence (i.e. in addition to the examples I have given above) are best described by Lu Hong & Scott Page (2001) & Hong & Page (2004).   As ever I cannot resist giving an example of the exception that proves the rule; on one occasion my wife

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[97] Jock Stein once gave me a lift on the Celtic team bus when playing St. Johnstone in Perth the year (1967) that they became the first team in Europe to ever win the treble, and I am fairly certain that I saw Alex Ferguson play for Dunfermline the same year (also against Celtic).   Celtic beat Inter Milan in the European Cup Final with a team of players who were all born within 50 kilometres of Glasgow. .

(as was at that time) was running the well-known 'Desert Survival' exercise with a group of international managers on an executive course in a British University. The team members had been allocated and the exercise commenced when a latecomer joined. She was a small dark woman and on offering her opinion was quickly cold shouldered by the group. To everyone's astonishment, she individually scored the highest score ever seen and easily beating the score of her group (the exact opposite of what was meant to happen). When congratulated on her score, she proceeded to explain why two of the model answers were incorrect! It transpired that one of her previous positions was within Israeli military intelligence and her specialisation was in desert survival techniques.

The way I applied this in practice, was to have weekly team meetings[98] (c. 15 pax) where everyone had a voice (using a round-table methodology) and this was augmented with other meetings to discuss larger issues where I would involve all of the managers in decisions affecting any one of them. This helped them understand the inter-connectedness of their problems and gave them wider business experience and I believe, higher levels of motivation and morale. The benefit for me was that the decisions that I made were markedly superior to the ones that I would have come to myself. Recognising that someone had a better option than the one I had previously favoured was, I am sure, a major factor in the successes of my career, Surowiecci (2004) in his book, the Collective Wisdom of Crowds, is but one of many who would agree with me.

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[98] This was an idea that I had copied from my previous line manager in MSAS Cargo International.

2.6.4.4 Value Position

The Value Position describes how the product or service (in this case, the author) delivers value to the customer (in this case the author's employer). It also depends on competitive positioning as well as value perceptions not merely deliverables divided by cost (salary etc.). It is perhaps not surprising that the lesson learnt here is that perceived value of deliverables is frequently more important than reality.[99] Time spent working hard and effectively is essentially wasted if no one knows about it. By (sometimes painful) comparison with others the author has seen that his can be as true for men as it is (a fortiori) for women.

One way of describing Value is by Quality divided by Price. Although Price (or remuneration) is not a particularly important driver for me it is generally better to be paid more than one is worth rather than less. The latter is likely to lead to dissatisfaction as a hygiene factor as Herzberg identified (1959). So whilst not being motivated by money I do, appreciate the things that money can provide.

One aspect of my own "Quality" is my mathematical ability. To be honest, this is modest at best. Due to a number of serendipitous events (managing the DHL Cost Model and the Pricing Function inter alia) I became known as strong in this area. It proved to my advantage to perpetuate this belief although I have been caught out on a very few occasions. I do understand numbers and which ones are important but my arithmetical skills are weak and I am particularly susceptible to errors on the placing of decimal points. This worked in my favour once, in a National Marketing game (in which we finished third in the Country) I set the price ten times too high, and thus accidentally discovered that the product we were selling was particularly price inelastic, we soared into the lead. We slipped from 1st position in the last round as a result of my

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[99] For an insight into how one writer views this in France read "Bonjour Paresse" (Maier, 2004).

conservative nature and decision to lock down on our advantage. On another occasion my friend (with a double first in Psychology and Economics) and I almost bought a nice house on a Greek island, the price seemed just too good to be true, as indeed it was, due to our misplacement of the decimal point in the Greek Drachmas exchange rate calculation.

2.6.4.5 Inner & Outer Directed Values

Inner & Outer directed values relate to more of the emotional needs of the Customer. Market research recognises the difference between functional and emotional needs. With many industrial goods, consumer durables and some fast moving consumer goods it is the functional needs that dominate. In the Service sector, however, this is less clear cut and when it comes to individual brand maps, the author suspect that the emotional needs heavily outweigh the functional needs. By way of example, employers are always nervous of new appointments as a poor choice will reflect badly on their own management skills. Hence, the perception that the new appointment is a relatively risk free safe pair of hands will frequently outweigh the apparent attraction of a more risk loving alternative. I refer to the risks of both new appointments and new (incoming) line managers in several locations within this thesis.

2.6.4.6 Substantiators

Substantiators (or physical evidence, one of Kotler's 7Ps) can assist to support the belief that the product or service meets the quality criteria demanded by the Customer. Within DHL we found that by answering the phone within 3 rings this substantiated the Customer's belief that we were fast, although there was no necessary connection to the speed of either our vehicles or our aircraft. I will expand on this later within this thesis (see section 5.6).

2.6.4.7 Target Market

The Brand Map relies upon the standard Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning theories to work effectively. Indeed as (McDonald & Dunbar, 2004) would argue there is no possibility of any success unless the Market is first meaningfully segmented. This is particularly dynamic when examining different work groups in different cultures over time. Basically, everything is changing.

My target market (for the purposes of this analysis) is my current or future potential employer. This relates to my professional practice and so, the managerial competencies identified in Figure 9, Chapter 1 are relevant. I do have other relevant market segments; Friends (who may provide leads to future employment), Family (who do provide support at critical times) and other work or social contacts (who may in time become future potential employers or source of leads – as indeed I have found to be the case). All of these other market segments are important – but in order to maximise the analytical power of the model, focus is required.

2.6.5 The Efficacy of the Brand Map

I have used the Brand Map continuously to monitor my own personal development over the last 15 years and found it to be a very useful tool. So useful in fact, that I have also used it in my Branding classes and encouraged Students to complete one for themselves. This is a personal subject, so I do not monitor this piece of work and will only give advice if specifically asked. The Students appear to enjoy this activity and I gain great satisfaction from helping them.

Sartre (1962) describes the evolution of character or a style over a period of time rather than something which is developed in early years and this, in truth, is how my road map came to pass. It does provide a succinct review of the position that I claim as my own and endeavour to live up to, Sartre calls this process existential psychoanalysis. I do recognise Nietzsche's (1974) (§290) observation that this 'style' can be retrofitted into an artistic plan to appear as either art or reason. I have endeavoured to avoid this rose-coloured bespectacled view.

> **I now can see that my love of flying comes not from the speed, the exhilaration nor the glamour. My need operates at a more prosaic level: The Check List, the planning and the Maps.**
>
> *Insight*

Why am I so enamoured with this rather simple pictorial description of my position and ambitions? I confess that I am something of a list maker. I used to have a shopping list pre-printed out with the staples I required when living abroad. I like summaries, condensed versions of knowledge in neat little packets. I continuously advise my Students to focus on the Gestalt of any case study. When I fly, the complexity of the instrumentation on any aircraft usually intimidates most of my students on the first few flights. But in reality, only the standard so called 6-pack actually matters (Airspeed, Altimeter, Artificial Horizon, Vertical Speed Indicator, Heading and Turn Co-ordinator). This I am sure, is where the idea of the Management Dashboard came from, monitoring only the major areas of management concern and only delving into additional information if one instrument was glowing amber or red.

5 C Analysis
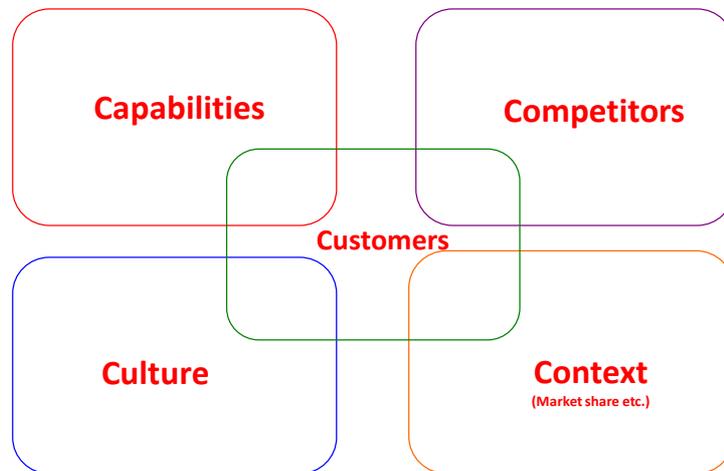
Figure 2.9   The DHL 5C Analysis

2.6.6 The Five C Analysis

In this section, I use the DHL 5C analysis (Customers, Competitors, Capabilities[100], Context & Culture)[101] to illustrate exactly how dynamic these changes are.   This relates back to the previous sections where I have discussed the importance of Tacit Knowledge and Fluid Intelligence.   It is only by monitoring and adapting rapidly to a turbulent and ever changing environment that any person can succeed in life.

One's own Capabilities will change as new skills are learned and others forgotten.   The Cultures one encounters are different, both in organisational terms and socio-culturally.

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[100] I distinguish between Competencies and Capabilites in this way, which some may disagree with. Prahalad & Hamel (1990) generally regard them as the same.   I describe competencies as things that you (or an organization) are good at. Like reading music, being able to play the violin etc. A capability is a sum of competencies which enables one to undertake a particular role or task, viz, conduct an orchestra. My definition would appear to be in line with that of Noam Chomsky (Sperlich, 2006).

[101] Many sources include Colloborators rather than Capabilities. I like this as it takes into account aspects of Co-opetition and Game theory. On the other hand the DHL version focuses on capabilities and competencies which are prime consideration according to Prahalad and Hamel (op.cit).

Clearly the work based Competitors (i.e. other colleagues vying for the same promotion) will also differ as will the target audience (or Customers in this nomenclature) and as they also have many different ethnic backgrounds and skill sets this makes positioning particularly complex. Indeed, the mere attribute of being British is a strong positive in some situations (e.g. Latin America where the author found being a 'Brit' was very much appreciated – mainly because I was not a 'Gringo' i.e. US American). In other cultures (like Malaysia) the negative perceptions of British arrogance can re-emphasise a pre-existing weakness. To use the typology of Pappu et al (2007) I may be seen as a product (in the marketing sense of the word) of the UK (hence this is my Micro country image) as well as being from Britain (which gives me a Macro Country image). Pappu et al explain how perceptions for either the Micro or the Macro image can be Favourable or Unfavourable. In the international arena this will clearly be different in different markets as they rightly identify. Amonini et al (1998) found that the Micro image outweighed the importance of the Macro image, however, different markets are more likely to have different perspectives on the Macro (or general country image).

The author takes Context in this analysis to refer to time. It needs no great imagination to think of the many changes that have occurred in the manner of Business communications, Work Practices, Technology etc. There are many aspects of Capabilities that can be discussed under the banner of "Improving one's Practice. But the fundamental difference in this analysis is that of Culture. As the diagram above illustrates, all of the circles in the 5C analysis overlap. Culture impacts on all of the other 4Cs. Moving from one organisational culture to another requires a certain skill set. Moving from one organisational and ethnic culture to another requires a step change. And this is where the importance of tacit knowledge and some form of street wise adaptability becomes of particular importance.

The Culture that the author encountered at DHL was one of Work Hard – Play Hard, very internationally orientated but with a definite bias towards British senior management (until the Deutsche Post takeover). As Trompenaars (2007) said people do not leave their own culture at the front door when they enter the office building. So although there was a clearly identifiable company culture the culture of the local country also impacted heavily. Although this is perhaps less the case in larger Regional offices than it is in a Country office as the mix of nationalities is greater in the former. Hence, all of Hofstede's (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005) five dimensions used to describe the differences in national culture come to bear and it is perhaps in this arena where the author's experience provides greatest illumination.

2.6.7 Conclusions on the Marketeer Experiences

The approach described is that of a single Case Study based on a research philosophy of Critical Theory (with an objective Ontology and subjective Epistemology). Triangulation[102] by way of utilising a combination of data sources (e-mails, diaries, PowerPoint presentations, Tool kits etc.) helped add rigour, breadth and depth (although not necessarily validation, (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Triangulation is more likely to support any finding or conclusion if it is based on several different sources; this is achieved by looking for corroboration in the responses of different work actors (i.e. colleagues etc.) on the same episode.

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[102] First defined in the area of research by Jick (1979), but originally related to navigational methods whereby, an accurate position can be fixed by reference to three known geographical points.

This research endeavours to define a framework and methodology which offers other international Marketeers the opportunity to capture their own learning experiences and consequently also improve their professional practice.

This section is intended to cover only that literature which is of key import to my published papers and this thesis and is thus necessarily written some time after the thesis was composed.   This is due to much of an action research thesis requiring a continuous search for relevant literature as opposed to a traditional thesis where the literature survey would need to be completed not only before data are collected but also well before the methodology is defined.   The wide ranging literature covered in sections 2.1 to 2.5 reflect the process by which I actually determined which literature was relevant whereas that contained in section 2.6 is to rapidly enable the reader to identify the links to my reflections in Chapters 3 and 4.

My stance utilises an interpretive approach where reality is only given meaning by understanding social interactions and the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckman, 1967) or multiple realities (Twining, 2000).   Hence, understanding may not depend upon the revelation of some hitherto unknown scientific truth but rather on human behaviour, the situational context and thus some generalisations.   As Crotty (1998, p. 9) put it "meaning is not discovered but constructed".   The foundation for this perspective is phenomenology and the work of Edmund Husserl (1913). Phenomenological analysis is not based on a scientific perspective but an empirical and descriptive one.   This is because any perspective must always be directed with some objective in mind.   As a result, consciousness can, in reality, cloud the issue.

Unconsciousness on the other hand (be it dreams, metaphors or language) may reveal more of the hidden truth.   Our body has a paradoxical quality in that it is simultaneously the platform of perception as well as an object perceived by others.   So

by making a conscious decision to locate oneself in a particular place the perspective necessarily changes (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

Interpretive social science theory describes and interprets how many people conduct their daily lives. It contains concepts and limited generalisations, but does not dramatically depart from the experience and inner reality of the people being studied. (Neuman, 2000). The term for the study of interpretation is called Hermeneutics after the Greek God Hermes who was the messenger of the Gods[103]. Socrates (in common with most Greek thinking at the time) regarded words as a vehicle for ambiguity and possibly dishonesty and trickery (Couzen-Hoy, 1981). Given Marketing's low and disreputable status see, inter alia; Brown (2006)[104] and Sheth & Sisodia (2006), it may be that he is the rightful true patron Saint (or God) of the art and craft.

I am essentially a case study of one (Yin, 2003) whereby I aim to interpret to gain insight which can be used to build up a framework from which theory can evolve. Hermeneutics originally was concerned with ancient religious texts and hence designed to give meaning to the unfamiliar and alien (Moustakas, 1990). Whilst the reader may not consider marketing to be especially "alien", post modernism does not seem to adequately take into account the shifting structures of capitalism (Morgan, 2003). Indeed some writers regard post modernism to be but the cultural arm of multinational capitalism (Stephanson, 1989). The popular protests in Wall Street and London in 2012 following a deep global recession perhaps reflect not so much "alien" as "alienation". For myself I see Post-modernism in Marketing as providing a useful tool for critique (Brownlie, 2006) and with no pretence of offering solutions, as such it is a worthy ally

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[103] The son of Zeus and the Goddess Maia. Hermes was known as Mercury in Roman times.

[104] "It is disdained by senior managers, who feel that marketing is failing to deliver on its much-trumpeted transformational promises. It is disdained, at least implicitly, by academicians who are talking to themselves rather than communicating with key constituents like practitioners and policy makers. The inevitable upshot of this near universal loathing is that marketing is losing touch with its markets…"

to that of critical realism and my own thesis. In particular it has opened the door to new approaches to methodology (e.g. semiotics, phenomenology, reflexivity, ethnography etc.) and new sources of insight (e.g. novels, movies, plays etc.) (Brown S. , 2006, pp. 222-223).

Hermeneutics is seen as akin to the concept of abduction (Eco, 1990) and abduction or hermeneutics has one major advantage over the more traditional methods of induction or deduction, which is that of understanding. Deduction can be seen as a rather sterile statement of facts with no explanation. Induction can be criticised as a leap from an observation to a theory with little understanding of the overall context.   Abduction involves a deeper level of analysis and can be more relevant to case study analyses. Abduction can be seen as endeavouring to capture the methods of both the hypothetico-deductive and inductive approaches by simultaneously utilising pattern recognition with the acceptance of possibly valid theories worthy of empirical verification.   However, there needs to be a recognition of the fact that all facts are in fact value and theory laden (Hanson, 1958).

Within the social sciences the potential reaction of individuals to analysis (possibly during reflection) is known as the double hermeneutic theory (Giddens, 1987).   I will go on in later chapters to explain how I see hermeneutics (or abduction) as a key competence of a professional marketeer as it contributes to the bank of tacit knowledge which enables superior performance.

CHAPTER 3   PUBLISHED PAPERS

3.0 Introduction

I have already declared this thesis as my own work but it is necessary that I detail the contribution of each author.   I am the first named author for all five articles which were written by me with input and guidance from my Supervisors Professor Dr. Nazari bin Ismail and Associate Professor Dr. Edward Wong Sek Khin.   Much of the material in these papers has been subsequently reconsidered and revised as part of the reflective cycle described in my methodology section.

<u>Actual Problems of Economics, Scientific Economic Journal</u>

Paper 1   Dent. M.M., Wong Sek Khin E. & Mohd Nazari Ismail (2012) Action Research and critical theoretic approaches to management studies. No.4 (130), pp366-371

Paper 2   Dent.M.M. & Wong Sek Khin E. (2012) Marketing Action Research: The career of a professional marketeer. No.6 (132), pp360-366

Paper 3   Dent.M.M. & Wong Sek Khin E (2012) The Marketeer experiences: Action research conceptual developments. No.7 (133), pp 324-330

Paper 4   Dent, M.M., Wong Sek Khin, E & Mohd Nazari Ismail (2013) Critical and interpretive social science theory: A case study approach. No.8 (146), pp268-275

Paper 5   Dent, M.M. & Wong Sek Khin, E. (2013) Reflexive practitioner case research: Ontological and epistemological orientation. No.9 (147), pp324-329

The page numbering in this section reflects that of the Journal within which each paper was published as I am required to present the original text in PDF format.

3.1 Hard Copy of the Original Papers

Paper 1   Dent. M.M., Wong Sek Khin E. & bin Ismail M.N. (2012) Action Research and critical theoretic approaches to management studies. No.4 (130), pp366-371

I am the first named author for this article which was written by me with input and guidance from my Supervisors, Professor Dr. Mohd. Nazari bin Ismail and Associate Professor Dr. Edward Wong Sek Khin.

<u>Paper 1 Synopsis</u>

In this brief synopsis I do not aim to repeat what is written in the abstract, but rather to provide an explanation of why I wrote this paper and what insight it gave me.

I wrote this paper early on in my research journey as I wanted a clear philosophical position to base my work upon. The work of Habermas intrigued me and I felt that this approach was one that I had much sympathy with. It helped me understand the potential value of my own insights and hence empowered me to have the confidence in my work. Despite the title there is no direct discussion of Action Research, the purpose was to provide the bedrock on which my Action Research would be based.

It was around this time that I attended a one semester doctoral course in the Philosophy of Management conducted by Associate Professor Dr. Edward Wong Sek Khin at Universiti Malaya. Far later in my research journey I decided to investigate further the antecedents of critical theory and this is contained, primarily in Chapter 2.5 of this thesis.

Paper 2   Dent.M.M. & Wong Sek Khin E. (2012) Marketing Action Research: The career of a professional marketeer. No.6 (132), pp360-366

I am the first named author for this article which was written by me with input and guidance from my Supervisor, Associate Professor Dr. Edward Wong Sek Khin.

Paper 2 Synopsis

In this brief synopsis I do not aim to repeat what is written in the abstract, but rather to provide an explanation of why I wrote this paper and what insight it gave me.

This paper was also written quite early in my research journey and leads on from Paper 1 to discuss Action Research having laid the foundations earlier.   The paper gives an overview of the author's career which is described in further detail in Chapter 4 of this thesis. It also develops the idea of a person as a brand and how that could be improved for the better (which is detailed in Chapter 2.5.4).

I wrote this mainly to document and understand for myself how my methodology should develop.   For the most part it did in fact hold true, however, my full understanding of the research process was at this stage still fairly naïve. The paper thus emboldened me to proceed further.

Paper 3   Dent.M.M. & Wong Sek Khin E (2012) The Marketeer experiences:
           Action research conceptual developments. No.7 (133), pp 324-330

I am the first named author for this article which was written by me with input and guidance from my Supervisor, Associate Professor Dr. Edward Wong Sek Khin.

Paper 3 Synopsis

In this brief synopsis I do not aim to repeat what is written in the abstract, but rather to provide an explanation of why I wrote this paper and what insight it gave me.

This paper introduces the idea of Living Theory and also the Living Thesis, both of which are fundamental to this thesis. I discuss these in some detail in Chapter 1.   I also talk more on some of the conceptual tools that I intended to use in my research i.e. the Brand Map and the Five Cs.   Subsequently I found the Brand Map most useful whilst the Five Cs I found far less so.

The reason that I wrote this paper was that I wanted to engage in some good quality research as soon as possible, having covered more theoretical concepts in Papers 1 and 2.   The result was not as successful as I would have hoped and this caused me to reflect on my approach.   I subsequently realised that this was perhaps a necessary stage of the process and I emerged with an improved plan.

Paper 4   Dent, M.M., Wong Sek Khin, E & bin Ismail M.N (2013) Critical and
           interpretive social science theory: A case study approach. No.8 (146),
           pp268-275

I am the first named author for this article which was written by me with input and
guidance from my Supervisors, Professor Dr. Mohd. Nazari bin Ismail and Associate
Professor Dr. Edward Wong Sek Khin.

Paper 4 Synopsis

In this brief synopsis I do not aim to repeat what is written in the abstract, but rather to
provide an explanation of why I wrote this paper and what insight it gave me.

Following Paper 3 I realised that the story telling aspect of living theory was a richer
vein for discovery.   By providing vignettes of incidents in my corporate life I was able
to gain insight into my own espoused and revealed values and the basis for decision
making that I, myself and other actors were using.   At this time I had not read much on
Soft Systems Methodology or the use of Rich Pictures, but I developed this technique as
can be seen in many sections in Chapters 1, 2 and 4.

It was at about this stage that I started to appreciate how my own skills as a researcher
were developing and I became more certain of my direction.

Paper 5   Dent, M.M. & Wong Sek Khin, E. (2013) Reflexive practitioner case research: Ontological and epistemological orientation. No.9 (147), pp324-329

I am the first named author for this article which was written by me with input and guidance from my Supervisor Associate Professor Dr. Edward Wong Sek Khin, of Universiti Malaya.

Paper 5 Synopsis

In this brief synopsis I do not aim to repeat what is written in the abstract, but rather to provide an explanation of why I wrote this paper and what insight it gave me.

I wrote this paper as I tackled the main question of this thesis – 'How do I improve my professional practice?'   I discussed Deming's Circle of Quality and I further develop this theme in Chapter 1.5 where I examine continuous improvement, Kai Zen, etc.

Once again the starting of the process (which this article represents) was at a lower level of understanding than I have since managed to acquire.   However, it did lead me to the key issues that I should be addressing.   Hence Paper 4 gave me another tool in my researcher's toolbox and Paper 5 a serious question to answer.

The resulting insights from these papers are detailed in Chapter 4.

3.2 Essence of the Five Papers

These five papers have all examined my ongoing career from a hermeneutic lens and attempted to relate critical theory to the case study.   The foundation for all five papers has been that of an action research methodology.   The methodology and data are not designed to develop generalisable management theory, but questions and areas for further inquiry are identified.

The next Chapter (Chapter 4) takes a longitudinal analytic approach to examine the backcloth and weft of my singular case study.   In this I will provide greater detail as to the sequence of events and decisions that have determined the path of my life. Additionally I will provide vignettes or specific examples to more fully illustrate the point that I wish to make.   Then I apply further reflective analysis on these episodes in an attempt to distil the key learning points for me.   These may not be the same learning points that others would derive from the same observations, however.   Chapter 5 concludes with a further re-capitulation of what I believe I have learned and attempt to place this within a more general context.

CHAPTER 4   AN ANALYSIS OF THE KEY EVENTS IN MY PROFESSIONAL CAREER FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF CRITICAL THEORY, ACTION RESEARCH & THE LIVING THEORY PARADIGM

4.0   Around the World

This section describes my career within the Travel and Distribution markets and my lived experiences. It details many of my tactical and strategic mistakes, what I have learned from them and how I capture that learning.   As such, it is essentially the applied section of this thesis and is meant to build some substantive meat around the theoretical bones provided in earlier chapters.

4.1   The Start

I was offered a place to study for a degree in Business Studies at Kingston Polytechnic but my Father did not want to complete the financial declaration for the Government funded student grant as the financial settlement for my Parents' divorce was still ongoing.   Without finances, further study was impossible.   But, I was then offered a place sponsored by the Automobile Association (AA) at a local Technical College (Twickenham as it was then called) as a Management trainee on a "thick" sandwich course in Business and Computer Studies. With the AA, I was paid a small salary and I thought at that time that IT was a growth field and this was a good career to enter. This meant that I worked for 4 months of the year at various AA offices and spent the other 8 months studying.   After completing my HND, I was offered a full time job as a COBOL programmer in Basingstoke with the AA and shortly after I married Fiona a beautiful red haired girl that I had met in Blairgowrie, Perthshire whilst visiting my Mother one Summer holiday.

After a year or so, I moved from development to maintenance programming which I found more difficult and partly just for the interview experience I applied for an internal position as a Market Analyst in the Market Planning department. Much to my surprise I was offered the job and about a year later was encouraged to sit for the Institute of Marketing professional exams, which I not only passed, but also won an IBM scholarship to study marketing model building in the United States en passant. My enthusiasm for Marketing and further study probably dates from this one event. The decision to enter for the scholarship could be described as a critical event on reflection. As Von Stumm et al have theorised, it is likely that the cumulative effect of success will operate as an ongoing magnifier for conscientiousness and curiosity (Von Stumm, Hell, & Chammorro-Premuzic, 2011)

It was whilst at the AA, I began to understand the culture for the first time. Flitting between Scotland and England multiple times perhaps prepared me to appreciate the differences I was about to experience. I had (as outlined above) moved from IT (or Systems as it was known then) to Marketing. The work practices and people could not have been more different. In IT, I was surrounded by young bearded analysts, each equipped with their own propelling pencils (for coding) and thermos flasks. It was a large department and work processes and output were carefully controlled and monitored. We saw ourselves as a highly intelligent group and looked down on the other departments who were our major internal customers (primarily Accounting and Customer services).

In Marketing, it could not have been more different. It was smaller and the employees far more exotic. Firstly it was no longer primarily a male reserve, secondly the structure was far flatter, in my (Market Planning) department there were but four of us, a very bright Oxbridge educated manager, a Unit Head (i.e. Junior Manager), myself

and a secretary).   Many of the Unit Heads were long haired and flamboyant in a style I wished to emulate.   I was by far the youngest (and was to remain so for about 3 years) and hence my duties would include taking the coffee percolator, cups etc. into the Mens' toilets and washing everything before the Departmental Secretary made the first brew of the morning.

After about a year, a section of eight people from AA Insurance services were moved next to us separated by only a 5 foot screen divider.   One of the ladies in the Insurance section was the wife of my Chess team captain (who worked in IT).   On one occasion, my manager was playing a Tony Hancock radio sketch (at fairly loud volume) to practice his presentation to the Board of Directors at the forthcoming Spring Planning Conference.   The Insurance section leader (a tall, young and rather officious individual) came round (quite reasonably) to complain about the noise, but made the mistake of phrasing the request as more of an order.   My Unit Head asked what Grade[105] he was to be giving orders?   The young man replied with great authority (clearly expecting instant obeisance) that he was a Grade 6.   My Unit Head laughed and pointed at me "he is a Grade 7 and he makes our coffee!"   This was of course a slight exaggeration, as I had not yet progressed to that level, but the point was clearly made and the section leader retreated, his tail between his legs.   Fortunately, this incident did not adversely affect my selection for the chess team.

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[105] The AA at the time used the Hay MSL grading system.

From the perspective of power relations it is interesting how this episode commenced.   The AA (as previously explained) had a close affinity with the armed forces and indeed employed many into the organization just after WWII. As a result this episode started with an instruction and was met with a higher authority.   An approach based on reason may have met with greater success.

This incident (amongst others) helped me realise that different groups are made different instantly by the things they do, their location, past experiences and interests. Schein (2004) was possibly the first to recognise that this is essentially intercultural.

I will elaborate with one further story which may seem rather unbelievable to the reader. One of our most successful commercial departments (about twenty staff) was headed by an expensive external recruit. For reasons that were difficult to understand, he isolated his department on the 13th floor with high (seven foot) wall units with only one exit/entrance (as opposed to the rest of the floor which was open plan). Furthermore, he forbade anyone from his department to speak to anyone else whilst at the coffee machine (positioned next to both the exit to the lifts and his own entrance/exit). On one April 1st some colleagues, went around the entire quarter of the 13th floor and erected a

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Whilst this behaviour might seem extreme critical theory can advance a few explanations of the possible motivation. It is possible that the General Manager concerned was experiencing criticism of his decisions by fellow members of the Corporate Affairs division (this division undertook the main Sales and Marketing activities). By reducing his team's daily contact with other departments he could reduce the level of knowledge of his actions amongst his competitors. The creation of a siege mentality is also well known as a good team building technique as leaders as diverse as Adolf Hitler and Alex Ferguson have demonstrated. I cannot, however, attest to what extent he succeeded in either regard.

US Western style wooden stockade topping to all of the wall units and capped it with a "Fort McXxx" entrance sign hanging next to the coffee machine. I still don't know who the culprit(s) were, but I have my suspicions. *(Ian/Harry?)*

The strength of feeling between different departments was not uppermost in my consciousness for some years after when I transferred from Marketing to Operations and all of a sudden, I could see yet another perspective.   I believe that most groups (strong ones at least) have quite negative views of others and this is partly how they succeed. Many leaders do indeed focus their followers on the external dangers in order to ensure internal conformity and cohesion.

I explain below a view which is not my own but encapsulated the views of many of the Professionals that I have worked with. I do not wish to give offence, merely to record intra-organizational perceptions.   This I take to be based on the Habermasian understanding as I describe in Chapter 3.

> "It describes structures of action and structures of mutual understanding that are found in the intuitive knowledge of competent members of modern societies."
> (Habermas J. , 1987, p. 383)

The legal department will tend to look down on all others as they are either not hard working or not intelligent.   The Marketing and IT departments perceive themselves as intelligent, albeit lazy and will look down on the Accountants.   The Accountants will see themselves as hard working.   But all will look down on Human Resources as both un-intelligent and lazy.[106]   As a keen long distance walker, I was given another version of this perspective from a Caver (my next door neighbour in Beaconsfield).   He looked down on Mountaineers, who similarly looked down on Hill Walkers, they in turn looked down on Long distance walkers and they all looked down on the Ramblers.   This tendency to deprecate those who are closest to us seems to be a common human failing and it also fulfils a basic desire to categorise others into a meaningful hierarchy. This

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[106] Once again I wish no offence – merely to record language as it was used within my hearing during the early 2000s.   A common term of derision for the Finance department was the diminutive "Bean Counters". The Personnel department was either "Human Remains" or the "HR Taliban".

has been the accepted norm since the time of Plato with "Priests taking precedence over Warriors,... the nobles over common people" etc., Darwin was the first to suggest that differing paths of evolution negated the view that one position in the hierarchy was necessarily superior to that of any other.   (Rorty, 1999).

Figure 4.1   Fanum House, Basingstoke.

I will recount one further episode of my time at the AA in an 18 storey building, the tallest in Basingstoke and hence the tallest between there and New York – given that it was mainly Atlantic Ocean between Basingstoke and New York, this is perhaps unsurprising.   The Chief Economist had some years earlier delivered a paper on the Optimal Location of AA Service Centres which took into account not only the structure and growth of British industry, society and motor car ownership, but also provided a model for the future capacity requirements of the AA breakdown recovery service. This was received (rightly) as a seminal work and the forecasts and recommendations duly incorporated into the AA's strategy. Some years later, I was asked to update this

magnus opus with the latest data and to rerun the forecasts. Somewhat to my surprise I found a long term growth factor in the equations which I could not at first reconcile. On closer examination of the offending Lotus 123 spreadsheet, I found that the "Year" column of the data base had been erroneously included as an independent variable, hardly enough to make any difference at all over a couple of years – but gradually adding more and more to the capacity we were forecasting to require. The advice to be careful of the veracity of published data was reinforced to me by my Economics lecturer Jonathan Boswell at about the same time when he gave us a Government white paper on the economic cost/benefit of a particular traffic infrastructure investment (a bridge as I recall). My group quickly came to a conclusion and made our recommendations – only to be shot down in flames. Some of the key data in the white paper were in error, and to be fair were glaringly obvious and we had all missed them.

So even assuming a bright intellect, peer review (presumably), a large salary (probably) and no political bias (not evident in either case above) the chance of a fundamental error is still extant. This advice remains with me still and hence my reluctance to accept all new "facts" without a substantial pinch of salt.

I stayed at the AA for a further 4 years as a Junior Manager with one direct report and a seat in the Management dining room, where I would be greeted by name and wine was served with lunch, no non-management staff were allowed. Latterly, I was Head of Travel Planning (an area the AA was well placed in at a time as a bona fide members' club [107] when air tour operations Group Inclusive Tours and Freddie Lakers' Skytrain[108] were at their peak of popularity).

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[107] At the time, all manner of clubs were springing up take advantage of cheaper group tour airfares. The archetypal "Parrot Fanciers of East Lewisham" was often quoted in the Travel Industry press in the same manner as the "Man on the Clapham Omnibus." Both fictitious constructs using areas of London to add authenticity.

I then left the AA and went back to Business School which had a strong formative impact[109] on me as well as providing many memorable experiences. Whilst there, I particularly focused on Market Segmentation and Price Discrimination using the AA as a case study. I also had the opportunity to develop my pedagogical skills teaching under-graduate micro-economics at Queen Mary's College (London University) and also at a local technical college in Basingstoke.

4.2 My First Big Mistake ?

After leaving Business School my Professor put me in touch with one of his colleagues in the field of Transport Economics, Professor Christopher D. Foster who was head of the Management Consultancy practice at Coopers & Lybrand Associates Limited, in Gutter Lane, EC4, London. After a very long and frustrating interview process, I was eventually offered a job as a Management Consultant. The salary was not significantly higher than I had been receiving previously at the AA, but it was an excellent training ground.

I did feel as if I was being treated as slave labour – which was indeed more or less an accurate description of how younger consultants were used by the major consultancies at the time. After a derisory salary increase, I began to feel much aggrieved and started to look for other opportunities that might be available. Oh the folly of Youth.

I had a very clear idea of where I wanted to get to and how to get there. And I show this diagrammatically below. After a spell in consultancy – specialising in Travel I saw myself gaining a job within the Travel Industry (ideally in a Tour Operator) as a senior manager with a company car and a medium sized department. To be honest, I did not

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[108] Freddie Laker was one of the first to introduce the "no-frills" air transportation model across the Atlantic from London to New York in 1977.

[109] It was at this time I was introduced to the idea of a Portfolio career whilst attending a week long (external) seminar run by Professor Charles Handy.

have any great ambitions to become a CEO or ever run my own company.   I did also

very clearly see a return to Academia in later years as my preferred vocation.

Outline Career Plan in 1980

- Business School
- Management Consultancy
- Management role in the Travel Industry with small department and Company car.
- General Management role
- Academia/Consultancy combined

Figure 4.2   Career Plan Source: Author's original notes

There were no dates attached to this plan, but the Academia/Consultancy was assumed

to be from my mid 50s onwards.   To my surprise getting my ideal job proved

fantastically easy. I was soon ensconced in a dynamic Tour Operator as the head of a

well-known UK holiday brand with two Product Managers reporting to me.   Seduced

by the higher salary, I had eagerly signed up.

On reflection this was probably a mistake.   By staying with C&L I could have learnt

the craft of Consultancy, had exposure to a greater number of markets and management

problems and still had plenty of opportunities to move into my dream job. I now give

this advice to many young Marketeers: staying in a rôle in which you are still learning

much and is filling in the necessary gaps in your development plan, is far more

important than a short term salary gain.   This is not to say that the situation is not

exploited by some employers to keep costs low and productivity high.

4.3 The Travel Industry Beckons

My period with Wings Holidays was hard, exciting and a great experience. I had a dynamic and energetic Indian boss and the Marketing department was packed with young ambitious MBAs. Morale was high and we all got along with each other very well.

My predecessor had left under a cloud and feeling he had been dismissed harshly, he exacted revenge – setting an auto-delete macro in our costing spreadsheet which would have rendered us incapable of setting the prices in our brochures and hence, missing the print deadline for the season's launch. It is no exaggeration to say that this would have bankrupted the company as approximately 40% of any seasons sales revenue was earned in the first two weeks after the launch of the brochure.

Fortunately, he confided in the Planning Manager in a public house the night after he had planted the macro. It would initiate the self-delete routine on the third time of opening the spreadsheet.

Together, the Planning Manager (a very capable mathematics trained Yorkshire man) and myself sat down with the spreadsheet and endeavoured to de-bug it. The first time we opened the program we were not fast enough to see what was happening and where the problem lay. Effectively this meant one life down and only one left. On opening the program the second time, we were able to identify the auto-delete bomb and safely delete the macro.

> This was the first time I had encountered an act of revenge against a company, but I now realise that it is a common phenomenon (Ismail, Mohideen, & Salina, 2009) and one that should be guarded against if at all possible.   More fundamentally from a critical theoretical perspective this can be seen as the response of an aggrieved (and relatively powerless) party against a more powerful ex-employer.

There was, however, one incident which was particularly stressful and difficult to see how to handle correctly.   We had formed an agreement with a Beauty Contest organisation as headline sponsor for two years.   Part of our contribution was a contra-deal for the provision of overseas photographic shoot locations and air travel for the contestants there and back.   Apart from the regional finals, which were televised we also gained exposure at an Area level for the local eliminating rounds. I was involved in several of these.   Some were located in Department Stores and many sponsored by the local radio station.

At one stage we were required to fly the contestants, the franchise owner, his wife and son, their dog and much else to the overseas photo-location at considerable expense.

I served on a panel of four judges in the UK who had been selected by the contest organisers.   I did not know any of the other judges and part of the agreement was that we should not discuss the candidates or results.

Towards the end of the evening, during a comfort break I expressed my surprise to one of my fellow judges that one of the young women had not even been placed in the first three. He said that he was surprised too as he had placed her first! The shock hit me immediately. I too had placed her in first place, therefore, mathematically it was impossible that she could not have finished in the first three, even if the other two judges had not placed her at all.

I managed to get some feedback from one of the event organisers. The local radio station wanted someone from their own broadcast catchment area to win and had found a technicality to (clandestinely) disqualify the woman we had both placed first. As the results were due to be read out and the judges assembled on the stage I had little time to think and thoughts were swirling around in my head. Should I make an announcement that the result was fixed or should I stay quiet? If I did say something, I was sure my microphone would be cut off quite quickly. My boss would be more than displeased, the result would likely be unaffected and my career could be blighted. ... I felt physically sick.

Either pragmatism or cowardice won the day and I said nothing (my then-Wife later congratulating me on my clear thinking). In terms of ethical dilemmas I had had very little time to think and other than my own personal conscience no one else could possibly gain from my whistle blowing.

But later reflection (and discussion with my Supervisor Dr Wong) I can now see that there was another route. On my own I was in a weakened position, see for example (Lewin, 1959). But if I had shared my concern with my fellow judge and he too had conferred with at least one of the other judges, we may have been able to do something about it. So my mistake was in framing the problem into a dichotomous question with only two alternatives rather than three options. On further reflection, I can now see

that this pattern has been repeated in other high stress decisions. These critical moments can do much to drive a career onto the rocks or safe from mishap. Career success often seems to be based on an assessment as a "safe pair of hands" rather than achievement per se.[110]

And it is not just the need for creative thinking that is needed. On further reflection, I can see that I am normally very cautious and like to analyse decisions carefully before risking a false step. I am fairly slow to anger and prefer to consider options and take counsel as necessary. So, when pressed to make important decisions under great time pressure I have reduced the problem to too low a level of simplicity. This means that I have what the Johari window would describe as an unknown area.[111] Unseen to both the external reviewer (as these critical moments tend to be rare events and occur over a very long period of time) and unseen by myself as the problem is too wrapped in amongst the trees. So, my need for careful analysis is reducing my opportunities to practice more rapid decision making. And once faced with the need for an instant decision my results are at best, average.

Whilst at Wings Holidays, I (briefly) enjoyed what I might term the 'charmed prince' syndrome. Within the first month of my arrival I had to collect a major industry award for one of our Advertising Campaigns which had been briefed, executed and succeeded long before my arrival. I protested that none of this was down to me, but nevertheless I was the one that had to collect the prize.

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[110] Indeed, I was told as much by a COO when applying, unsuccessfully, for a position as an Area Director. The major barrier was my lack of recent Operations experience and hence, a slightly higher risk profile.

[111] Dick Cheney famously described these as "Unknown unknowns". This actually makes a lot more sense than may be at first realised. Basically, he was saying that there were many things that you knew that you knew little or nothing about. But there are certain dangers in existence that have not yet been revealed. The concept is linked to probability theory and following Taleb (2007) these events were named Black Swans.

Figure 4.3 Next Stop India ?

It is a fact that incumbent managers can be either blessed or cursed by what preceded them. In my case and on this occasion, I was the lucky one.

My three products thrived and (I think) I was regarded as a very successful manager. I had a colleague who was managing a slightly less glamorous product and who was under tremendous strain due to the pressure exacted by the Marketing Director.   Sadly, due to a continuous barrage of attacks in open meetings he took to drinking. At mid-morning he would leave to visit our operational unit in another building, en passant stopping in at a local hostelry for a double brandy.   By the time we met him at lunch time (in the same establishment) he was six sheets to the wind. I suspect this was a major factor in him losing his job.

The tragedy (as we later discovered) was that his product was doing commendably well in declining market, whilst mine was surging ahead on the crest of an expanding market. This misinterpretation of a Product Manager's performance was to be later repeated at both MSAS and DHL. From my reading of current strategic business case studies (which I now teach) this is an all too common phenomenon.

Taking account of the risk, my colleague took out redundancy insurance (which I did not).   This benefitted him well and he was subsequently able to collect.   For any

insurance company this is what is termed moral hazard. My colleague was well aware of the situation he was in and had (to a limited extent) the opportunity to affect the outcome. It would be easy to criticise his opportunism, but in the final analysis was the blame with him alone or within the system?

In retrospect it is clear that taking out some kind of redundancy insurance within any company that practices policies of hire and fire is but a sensible defensive move. My lack of comprehension on this key issue I now regret.

I will add one more cameo to my experiences in the Travel Industry. As Marketing Manager for three products (Wings Holidays, Wings Faraway and Wings Golf Holidays) I had to oversee the photographic selection for the brochure. I usually did this at arms-length, determining the ideal positioning, composition and message and leaving the rest to the Photographic Librarian and the Product Manager. I was somewhat stunned to be told by one of my Product Managers that I would have to undertake this task. I enquired why and was told that she was in fact, colour blind! As all of our photography was geared towards hot yellow sand, teal green oceans brightly coloured cocktails and sky blue cloudless skies, this was a shock. I asked why this had never come up at her job interview and she replied that she had never been asked (by my line manager) this key question.

Surprising though this may sound, I have also frequently encountered (for example) people recruited to organisations who had no driving licence despite legal capability to drive being of significant importance to the job rôle. I learned from this and constructed my own personal little crib sheet of questions to ask at interview and it did indeed serve me well. Once again, this could be a case of shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted. I prefer to look at it as learning from others' mistakes.

Additionally, I was trained (in the US) to ask questions of young women of child bearing age as to their social life, pets and physical exercise etc. which would inevitably result in their revealing their marital status – despite legislation restricting any direct questions relating to marriage, intended future children etc.

My insight on this is somewhat prosaic, many recruitment problems are indeed very predictable and hence, avoidable. Although prosaic, I suspect that this is extremely rich territory for any HR related PhD in any country.   The key question is why do prospective employers miss these vital and necessary data?

4.3   A Collection of Mistakes

When I was working towards my Private Pilot's Licence in the United States in 2000, I was intrigued by my Flight Instructor Giancarlo Carpenelli telling me about a little book that he kept in which he logged all of the mistakes that he made.   He described one occasion when he accidentally deployed all of the emergency oxygen masks whilst undertaking pre-departure checks.   Normally, the Captain would assign the flight attendants to individually replace each one, but on this occasion, to reinforce the learning experience Giancarlo had to do the needful.   In his book, he promised himself to never make this mistake again.

This idea appealed to me and I started to more diligently record my activities, mistakes, triumphs and disappointments on a more systematic basis. I already had a system to capture these data – a small loose leaf diary[112] - an idea I had picked up from a

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[112] Diaries lack hindsight but do demonstrate how ordinary everyday life intertwines with headline history(cf. The Common Stream (Parker R. , 1975)) be they Samuel Pepys, Anne Franke or Andrey Kurkov (Kurkov, 2014)   I admit that much of my inspiration came from none of these – but from the book Bridget Jones's Diary by Helen Fielding (1996), whereafter I resolved to return to my diary which I had commenced in 1969 but had desisted from following my Step-Mother's discovery of some of my writings in c. 1971.

colleague at Business School in about 1980.   As with Samuel Pepys I have discovered

that the 'cipher' that I use is what has been referred to as Rich's System, whereby I

occasionally use Dutch, German, French or Spanish phrases when I want to keep

something *'particularly concealed'*, I am also (like Pepys) much an aficionado of

abbreviations. [113]
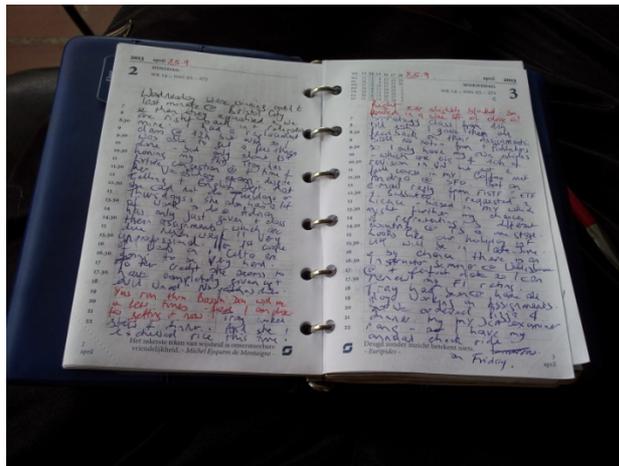
Figure 4.4 The Author's Diary

I think as a key to self-reflection, self-improvement and organisational success this is a

very important learning point for both myself and you too, gentle reader.   I did this

without a formal approach or methodology, exposure to the works of Holly (1987) &

(1989) would have helped. More specifically a diary utilising a systematic framework

as suggested by Schein (1999) - namely the ORJI model (Observation, Reaction,

Judgement and Intervention).   The Reaction phase may be considered to be akin to

reflection and is an important precursor to action.   However, it is easy in practice to

accidentally omit the explication of the reaction and leap too quickly to judgement and

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113 Lord Braybrooke made the remark in his "Life of Pepys," that "the cipher employed by him greatly
resembles that known by the name of 'Rich's system.'" When Mr. Bright came to decipher the
manuscript, he discovered that the shorthand system used by Pepys was an earlier one than Rich's, viz.,
that of Thomas Shelton, who made his system public in 1620.

then action.   Yet, without fully understanding the feelings that any given observation may generate, it is not possible to design an optimal well thought out response.

The system closest to the one that I have used, is that proposed by Zuber-Skerritt & Teare (2013). They propose a diary based upon four key questions; An Activity List, What went well and why, What did not go well and why, What could I have done differently, and finally – What have I learned?   This is repeated on a Daily, Weekly and Monthly basis and can be augmented with additional interface with a life coach.   I have not (so far) engaged the services of a life coach but to a certain extent a partner may be able to take up the rôle (in my case particularly so). The system that I have used for many years was slightly different in time scales – Daily, Monthly and Yearly but otherwise similar to that of Zuber-Skerrit & Teare.

Apart from the many obvious systematic, analytical, interpretative and reflective benefits that a diary/journal provides it also can be used as a dumping ground for painful or embarrassing experiences (McNiff, Lomax, & Whitehead, 2003), a functionality which I too have frequently availed myself of.

Within this approach, it is important to formulate good questions.   In the early stages more general questions can be asked, but with each successive twist in the spiral more insightful questions can be generated.   This is in accordance with the Action Research paradigm whereby fuzzy questions provide fuzzy answers, which then generate less fuzzy questions which then lead to more precise research methodologies (Bob Dick).

I have included some direct quotations from my diary which indicate my state of mind at particular junctures in time, some describe emotional, irrational and selfish behaviours.   This has been referred to as narrative wreckage by Whitehead & Delong (2008) and demonstrates how an individual encounters difficulties and is forced to re-channel destructive emotions in order to move on in life.

"A smooth story of self might initially feel comfortable to a listener, but without the acknowledgement of what has been involved in persisting in the face of pressure, a story can lack authenticity".

To give but one example, I was unlucky enough to run into problems with Internal Revenue Service in the United States about two years after my assignment there had finished. I was sent an automated tax demand for $37k. Phoning the IRS proved difficult as they did not appear to keep any records of past letters or phone calls, so every interaction was prefaced with an urgent demand for payment. I pointed out that I was (correctly) paying tax to HM Government in the UK and hence they were effectively attempting to double tax me. My pleas fell on deaf ears, I had to pay up and await a refund from the UK Tax office. Worse was to follow, many of my travel expenses in Latin America (including hotel bills) were deemed payment in kind and I was additionally taxed on those. On top of this, a schedule of penalties were levied and interest applied. I gathered up all of my savings and paid the bill – simply because any further debate would have added fuel to the fire. For eight weeks or more, I sweated awaiting the UK tax refund. I had no money left in my bank account, I had no money for anything, my building society standing order for my mortgage bounced. A month later, it bounced again. I could not sleep at night and I felt that things were beginning to spiral out of my control. My work was suffering as I could not think about anything else. The building society then told me that if I missed the next payment they would foreclose on the mortgage.

At this stage, I did what I should have done in the first place – went to my new UK boss and told him what had happened. He was very sympathetic and went straight to HR in search of a solution. DHL lent me (interest free) the money to keep my head above water.

Looking back at the terror I was experiencing at the time, I can still feel the nausea at the pit of my stomach and the sense of helplessness and despair.   But it demonstrates *a fortiori* how pressure clouds judgement and leads to sub optimal decisions.   Fortunately I did not turn to alcohol as a solution but I genuinely think that I was close to mental breakdown.

4.4 Learning from Mistakes

There is nothing new about the idea of learning from mistakes.   One of my line managers made it very clear that he would be forgiving of any mistake, but he would take a very dim view if the same mistake was made on a second occasion. I am sure that this was mostly done for effect – adding to the myths and stories of our company culture, but it was indeed effective.

Habermas viewed social practice as an ongoing test by which one's own background knowledge of the lifeworld is compared against a spectrum of validity claims (McCarthy T. , 1987).   Mistakes that I make may be due to simple errors in execution or, more fundamentally from a failure to correctly read and interpret the actions of my fellow colleagues.

However, I have one trait which goes beyond this which some might describe as bolting the stable door (after the horses have fled).   This behaviour could be described as unnecessarily bureaucratic and wasteful of time, energy and resources.   But experience has taught me that (contrary to the wisdom encapsulated in the saying above) this is a sound move. Mainly, because in Marketing the same problems, situations and solutions tend to come around.   By going back, understanding what went wrong (in a very specific and unique situation) and correcting the database, selection criteria or application will prevent you (or your company) making the same mistake in two years'

time. As the half-life of a good Marketing Manager is about 18 months, this may seem prosaic, but the success or failure of such a project can be the downfall or a launch-pad for future career plans. I once witnessed such a downfall after a relatively minor mistake caused a major issue concerning our most important Customers. The lady in charge was immediately dismissed.

For many, the low probability of such a strange combination of circumstances renders it pointless to devise a plan to counter such a situation. But probability does tell us that if you have been struck once by lightning then the probability of being struck again is exactly the same as it was before, once again disproving the popular saying that lightening does not strike in the same place twice. Indeed one could go further and theorise that if lightning has struck there before and probability is distributed in a lumpy fashion then if there were any conducive factors to the lightning favouring your location (for example the Clock Tower in the movie 'Back to the Future')[114] then, it may well be well disposed to discharging there yet again.

Some people may interpret my analysis as a justification for SOPs or Standard Operating Procedures, but, this would be to miss the point. SOPs are (usually) more concerned with best practice and avoiding litigation, i.e. avoiding responsibility or blame. They also operate as basic guidelines as to what to do if things take a turn for the worst. What I am advocating is going back and *eliminating* that particular source of error or mistake, possibly not for your benefit – but for the benefit of future incumbents (and hence Customers) of your rôle.

This section both overlaps and reinforces my comments about serendipity and the science of being lucky.

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[114] Although as (Brown S. , Marketing: The Retro Revolution, 2001) pointed out the back to the future propensity currently works well in many consumer markets.

4.4 The Gently Phenomena.

One other interesting phenomena, which was, at the time, unique for me, was one of my fellow consultants moving from C&L to join me at Wings just a mere two months later. I thought this to be a remarkable coincidence but as my career progressed, I found it becoming increasingly common.

Various writers on organizations (Back, 1992), (Bechtold, 1997) & (Black, 2000) utilise Chaos and Complexity Theories to posit a view of multiple dynamic interactions within a company.   On reflection, I now see this as even more complex still – there is also an industry dimension where the same actors come into contact with each other in different rôles at different times in different organisations. I will refer to this phenomenon in more detail in later sections. In the absence of a suitable name for this principle of interconnectedness, I will refer to it as the "Gently" phenomena.

I refer to the Gently phenomena being the probability that in any one person's career that they will come back into contact with past colleagues in other organisations later in their career.   Given, geography, educational background, the job specifications, age group etc. This (in my experience) is quite common.   The way I would describe it would be similar to that of the basic nuclear model, with the Organisation represented by the centre of the atom with various professions (Marketing, Engineering, Finance, IT, HR etc.) orbiting around.   Any individual may be closely attached to his professional discipline or area of expertise or more closely attached to the organisation itself.   This is clearly demonstrated in the HR practices of UPS and DHL in the early 2000s where UPS would deliberately move executives from one discipline to another whilst DHL relied more upon professional expertise.   Nonetheless some people would leave and join other organisations - usually within the same discipline.
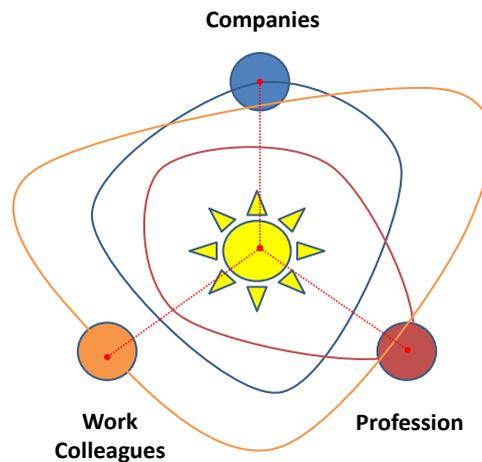
Figure 4.5   Orbital Career Intersections

The reason that the Gently Phenomena[115] is important, is because these individuals may know more about you than your current work colleagues (cf. the Johari Window pane discussed earlier) which can be either a positive or negative for your career.

The second seminal learning experience with Wings was Las Palomas Oasis,   a self-catering/hotel complex in which Rank Travel had a financial interest and therefore had strong interest in placing on sale at the earliest date possible.   This resulted in photography being commissioned before the building had actually been completed.   I was not a party to the photographic shoot itself, but it was clear that much had been done to make it appear as if the complex was not only completed but also already functioning.   Careful positioning of beach towels, people (Rank Travel staff), drinks,

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[115] New Evidence Scholarship questions whether researchers really do evaluate evidence "atomistically" in terms of the logical relationship between individual facts rather than "holistically" in terms of the overall coherence of stories (Nicolson, 2013).

food etc. all gave that impression, as did the relocation of a local bougainvillea bush to add colour to the foreground.

The next stage was what would nowadays be called photo-shopping of the transparencies (i.e. photographs). In this, grey skies become blue, grey sand became yellow and more worryingly, concrete rubble was safely airbrushed out of sight.

Our German partner caught sight of the final proofs as we were going to press and alerted us to the fact that this was most definitely illegal in Germany and we had to stop the printing press. The cost of so doing (notwithstanding the difficulty of then being able to book another slot on a press large enough for our print run) meant that we needed to find another way around this. This was done in conjunction with our resident Lawyer and the phrase which we eventually came up with remains burnt onto my subconscious to this day:

"The sand and shingle beach at Las Palomas Oasis has interesting rock pools". Whilst this makes no mention of beach towels, bougainvillea bushes etc., from a legal perspective, it did make it sufficiently clear that the beach was not all pristine yellow sand and was thus, enough to cover us legally. It also had the huge advantage of only requiring a change to the "Black plate". The interesting thing about this episode was how every individual involved worked towards what they perceived as the best interests of the company – even though that is clearly against the interests of the Customer. Lewin (op.cit.) predicted this in his Field Theory where he stated that human behaviour was a function of context which included both the organisation and its employees' actions. This working towards the perception of what "Management" would want without any explicit directive, is something that I have observed many times since.

The Wings era came to an abrupt end when the Marketing Director left suddenly and the new incumbent and I had radically different ideas on the brand (he wanted to take my up-market brand and position it as a mass market product). My TV Commercial was cancelled and all of my carefully assembled research and ideas were of no further use. I left under a cloud but soon found a new rôle, again relating to travel but this time for freight, rather than for people.

Serendipity or bad luck? [116] At first I thought the latter. But my old company and all of my ex-colleagues were made redundant on Christmas Eve (as was common in the Travel Industry at the time as the peak booking season commenced on December the 26th) following their acquisition by Horizon Holidays. This, in turn through a period of industry consolidation was followed by their acquisition by Thomson Holidays and then again in turn, by a German tour operator.

4.5 International Logistics

MSAS was a division of Ocean Transport and Trading, a large UK based multinational and one of the UK's top 100 companies ranked by turnover.

I took over a tiny Marketing Department (myself and one other) but with a free rein to apply the new techniques I had learned at Business School, in Consultancy and in Consumer (B2C) marketing to a purely Industrial market.

My predecessor had departed precipitately and on launching an expedition into his filing cabinet, I soon found out why. He had written a memo to the European COO (copying in his Country Manager) complaining about the lack of investment in analysis, statistics and IT. I read the memo and it was clear that on all counts it was painfully

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[116] "There is a tenuous relationship between skill and luck and the ambiguity between the two".
Was I lucky or was I good? (Silver, 2012)

accurate. Apparently his secretary had begged him not to send it but he felt so impassioned that reason did not prevail and hence, his sudden departure. Various writers have advised on the best procedure in cases like this: Write the memo venting the full spleen of your anger, once finished on no account send it, simply put it in a file ready for further proof reading and correction. If necessary, take it out again the next day. Refine and hone the memo trying to be as clear as possible whilst simultaneously taking out any particularly inflammatory remarks. Then, on no account send it, but file it for further consideration. Continue this process until the thirst for confrontation has completely passed.

In the twenty teens, this seems to be an ever increasing problem with a number of high profile tweets causing prominent politicians to lose their jobs and famous sportsmen to instantly sabotage their own brand value. Hitting the "Send" button without adequate thought is a career limiting option.

Funnily enough, this was the early stages of another Gently phenomenon as I encountered the author in question when I joined DHL some four years later.

One of the features of the job was a road-show to the various Areas of the UK presenting at area Sales or Operations meetings. I prepared well and was quietly confident that they would go well. And indeed they did. I engaged and debated and felt that I had done a good job. Finally, I only had one presentation left, in Glasgow. Making the (possibly naive) assumption that I was back on home territory for the final celebratory coast downhill, I had a rude awakening. I suffered the most severe verbal

mauling over our marketing strategy, positioning and core values that I have ever experienced.[117]

Once again, however, I was to find myself in the midst of another acquisition. Ocean Transport & Trading bought out another large international freight forwarder called Jardine Air Cargo from the Jardine Matheson group. Quite quickly, a new management team of ten people was announced and the COO had a creative plan to harness the talents of both companies. Each company was to contribute five members to the "Board" and I was to be one of those five from MSAS. This was now indeed, a Senior Management position of a far larger company reporting to a very dynamic and enthusiastic Australian Country Manager (who was later to knock one of my front teeth out whilst contesting a particularly competitive squash match).

Unlike my experience of the acquisition of Ellerman Sunflight by Wings (in which only the Marketing Director was retained for a short period) this was an attempt at Cultural integration and the terminology used was that of integration. It was, however, a failure. The cultures of both companies were entirely different. MSAS was structured and systems and process driven, Jardine by contrast was more entrepreneurial and opportunistic. They themselves had taken over another rival (ASA) a few years previously and some cultural issues still simmered as a result of that.

All of the Jardine members of the Management team had gone within a year. The number two to the Country Manager jumped ship at a critical moment and took our largest account (Ford Motor Company) with him and set up his own Freight Forwarding business, the ex Jardine Finance Director soon followed him. The HR Director had serious differences with the Country Manager and soon also left. The Sales Director

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[117] I had a very similar experience on a Thames Vale Advanced Motor Cycle assessment ride some years later. After a faultless first half, I became overconfident and completely failed the second half. My assessor's assessor told me that I had adopted the "downhill straight" mentality.

was the last of the 'Jardinies' to leave – for a competitor. In the meantime, the Commercial Director (who had initially recruited me) was deemed an unnecessary expense following our now poor financial results. At the end of the year, there was only myself, the Country Manager and the IT Director left (and the IT Director was shortly afterwards transferred to the International Head Office in Bracknell).

The remaining member of the Management team (the Director of the Express Division) also left to join a Competitor and that left a gap which I was slotted into. It gave me Operational experience, a larger team (circa 25), P&L responsibility, some large accounts of my own and the opportunity to apply some of the management theories I had learnt. This worked well and revenue rose whilst (in conjunction with the head of Air Cargo Space Buying) I reduced costs by rationalising our suppliers (effectively wholesale courier companies for the most part). For certain destinations, I chose to retain DHL Express (and again by consolidation gain more favourable rates). This relationship developed further when DHL required a partner for an Air Freight contract they had gained.

The Country Manager soon realised that here lay an opportunity to streamline the business (the UK was the only country with an Express product) and sell off the Division to DHL. Conscious of the risks of buying a trading entity in the Air Cargo/Express business and then finding that the client base rapidly disappears to join with the previous management DHL were keen for me to move (as part of the deal) to them. And indeed, I was explicitly named in the final Sales agreement. I had a target of 72% customer retention after a period of 6 months (which I duly met). I too, was very conscious of how the Ellerman Marketing Director had been treated by Wings. Information was gleaned from him and at the point where he was no longer useful, he was paid off.

It was quite clear that I was not trusted as each Sales call I made to my major Customers was with a DHL sales representative who then took on active management of the account (although some Customers continued to revert to me with problems if their sales representative moved on for some years after). The rest of my team had nearly all moved into positions in DHL and were all relatively safe. I, however, had increasingly less to do (other than trouble shoot) and I fully expected to be terminated shortly.

4.6 International Express

During my time at MSAS Express, I had completely rationalised the Tariff making it far simpler and a more effective sales tool. Just before I had arrived at DHL, they too had launched a new pricing structure based on Activity Based Costing (ABC) the logic and the mathematics were impeccable. The selling of it to Customers was, however, badly executed. The original objective had been to lose certain "unprofitable" groups of Customers. But the definition of unprofitable using ABC methodology included allocating fixed costs which had no relationship to actual Customer activity or indeed marginal costs. The end result was that some 30% of the account base was lost but with no corresponding reduction in costs. All of a sudden, I was revealed as the one eyed man in the kingdom of the blind cf. Wells (1904) and I found myself appointed as Pricing Manager, the pricing function having been unceremoniously removed from Finance and allocated to Marketing. At this time, the entire DHL Country Management team (with the exception of the Finance Director who moved on to Head Office in Belgium) were relieved of their duties and a new Country Manager was appointed.

Another vignette demonstrating Sod's Law[118] was the Special Price Negotiation form (or SPN for short). This (unfortunately) was also the international IATA airport code for Saipan, a territory in the Western Pacific. A number of Sales executives complained to me about how slow the accounting department was in programming this into the invoicing system but, when I spoke to the manager in charge, she assured me that the Sales teams were taking advantage of lax procedures and claiming to have submitted requests several days before they had actually done so in order to leap the queue. I was not entirely sure who to believe but thought little more about it, putting it down to the natural antipathy between Sales and Finance.

Sometime later, I was sitting in the Post room chatting[119] to one of the people there when I noticed an internal envelope addressed to the SPN unit arrive. To my surprise, this was instantly dropped into the sort sack for material bound for Asia Pacific! I enquired why this was and received the answer that SPN was a US Territory in the Pacific and this is where this material was bound for. Further questioning revealed that many such internal envelopes were seen each month and that they had been directing them to Saipan for as long as anyone could remember! I have no idea as to what our office in Saipan thought of this – but on reflection, I suspect that they were (eventually) redirected to the accounts department in the UK and this is why they took so long to reach their intended destination.

I applied the same logic to a new DHL tariff as I had done at MSAS, this proved very successful as did my management of ABC and the Costing Model in customer pricing. In time, I started to acquire other Marketing functions such as Planning, Market Research and finally Marketing Systems.

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[118] Similar to the US Murphy's Law but with more of a malicious element of karma.

[119] Following the dictum of Tom Peters (1985) of managing by wandering about. My preferred term is Corridor Cruising.

Part of the Planning and Market Research responsibilities was that of Competitor Monitoring. This was something that I had previous experience in and decided to take forwards. Rather than simply a consolidation of various newswire reports I wanted to understand not just what my Competitors were doing, but also why they were doing it and then try to predict what they might do next.   This was prompted by a comparative advertising campaign (often referred to as Knocking Copy), by one of our rivals.   Their claims were false – but it took a lot of time and money (including the hire of a Queen's Counsel) before we could satisfactorily prove that. In the event, by the time we had mustered sufficient evidence the campaign had almost run its course and the damage had been done. Our Country Manager charged me with the responsibility to ensure that this did not happen again.

The programme that I designed utilised a number of different tools to gain perspective on our Competitor activities:

We revamped our Newswire reporting to be grouped by Competitor and vigorously rooted out uninteresting stories so that we were not swamped with useless data.   The researchers working for us began to understand what was of interest and what was not. Regular reviews augmented this process.

We launched a more systematic set of Quantitative transit tests (in collaboration with WHQ) whereby, shipments were sent through a third party (typically, a market research agency). Shipments were sent to and from various city pairs and the total transit time measured. From this, we could benchmark our performance.   This was very similar in concept to the breakdown simulations that we used whilst I was at the AA, where we would test the RAC, the AA (i.e. ourselves), Red Rovers and the National Breakdown Recovery Club as to response times and times to diagnose and fix various mechanical or fuel related problems

In addition, we instigated a set of Qualitative transit tests. These were small scale and run two or three times a year. We used these to test out the Quality of Sales staff on initial meetings with Customers (rather disturbingly on this measure we came very much in last position), we did not pay the bill to test out competitors credit control measures, we sent out unusual shipments (fragile biscuits) and heavy bags of ill packed sand etc. From this, we gained significant insights into real strengths and weaknesses.

None of this was particularly path breaking – but the final packaging was. We introduced the concept of Shadow Marketing. In this system, we appointed one manager to shadow one competitor. Only our four top competitors (FedEx, UPS, TNT and the Post Office) were monitored and the marketing managers selected came from diverse areas; Product, Advertising, PR and Pricing. Our team also comprised the Market Research Manager, a secretary and myself.

Each Shadow was responsible for writing and updating a section of the Battle File – where all of the pertinent information on each Competitor was gathered. In time this was further developed into a smaller format – A5 sized Battle Cards which provided the Sales Force with the key facts and very well thought out responses to any Customer objections or barriers to sale. This was done on a regular basis in conjunction with the Area Sales Managers.

Sales also had to compile lists of the main competition held accounts in their area. These were not accounts necessarily on their target list, we just wanted to know where their strengths were. This information was later to prove invaluable.

Operations were also involved and we actively encouraged the Couriers to alert us to Customers who may also have large inbound or outbound Competitor accounts. It was surprising to us how much business that was out there that our Sales teams were unaware of.

Both 'Above and Below' the Line agencies (as well as our Market Research agencies) were asked to assist and the feedback from them was this was the most advanced Competitor Monitoring system in existence in the UK at the time (mid 1990s).

Serendipity was also to strike a massive blow in our favour. Federal Express were encountering difficulties in the UK (and also European) markets. Our intelligence suggested that they were doing well in a weak market. Later conversations with one of their top strategists (some years later) revealed that in fact their belief was that they were losing share to us (hence prompting the comparative advertising campaign). To our surprise, FedEx announced that they were exiting Europe and handing their Customer base over to TNT.

With all the Competitor and Customer information at our finger tips, we were able to swing into action and capture a large percentage of the Federal Express accounts within 24 hours – faster in fact than TNT were able to react. The boost to our Customer base, revenue and profit lines were instant.

Not surprisingly, this episode was viewed with great interest by our head office in Belgium who listed the Shadow Marketing programme as a BDP or Best Demonstrated Practice. It was soon rolled out as a European initiative (with admittedly less success and probably less vigour). It did, however, succeed in raising awareness of the necessity of a certain level of Competitor Monitoring capability in each DHL entity.

It was about this time (with Market Research under my wing) that I continued on with the Market Segmentation exercise that I had instigated at MSAS. The results there had been disappointing. I had solid results on where our business came from by Standard Industry Code (SIC) but I could find no real similarities between manufacturers of heavy industrial rubber tyres and manufacturers of specialised rubber diving seals. The

information was specific, but I could discern no easy way of applying the knowledge in practice.

I got myself sent on a two week advanced Industrial Marketing Strategy course at INSEAD and researched the latest literature Market Segmentation theory. Finally, I decided to follow the model proposed by Professor Malcolm McDonald of Cranfield University see (McDonald & Dunbar, 2004), but ours was an earlier edition.   The fact that DHL already had good links with Cranfield University through Professor Martin Christopher, who ran a number of advanced logistics courses for us was actually coincidental.

This worked well and the work was well advanced when Head Office in Belgium decided that they wanted to invest in Market Segmentation and that it made no sense for each individual Country to conduct its own unique segmentation.   So, I was assigned an additional project rôle as leader of a joint UK and Spanish segmentation team. This was really my first serious foray into the swamps of inter-cultural management.

4.7 Europe & Africa

Things progressed from there. The Worldwide Head Office (WHQ) was merged with the European Regional Office (both based in Brussels) to form a new Global Coordination Centre (GCC). A new European Marketing team was formed, headed by a very bright and charismatic Dutchman who was ex Proctor & Gamble with some strong ideas on Branding and Positioning.   He also had responsibility for the new Segmentation project and I was offered the job (with little or no competition, I believe). I had a team under me consisting of one Dane, one Briton, one US American lady and one Belgian secretary.   My counter parts were a Belgian Berber in charge of Advertising, a Norwegian in charge of Product Development and another Briton in

charge of Pricing. Within GCC there were many other nationalities, primarily European and the majority either Flemish or Waloon (Dutch or French speaking Belgians).

The Culture was international but many of the top management team were British. There was an active desire to bring in other nationalities but this seemed to be difficult in practice – possibly because of language. All meetings were conducted in English.

When I left the UK, I was asked by my colleagues to not do, as so many of my predecessors had, and "go native". This I thought, was very unlikely given that the head of the Business Development Group was from Manchester. I could not have been more wrong.

For the first six months, I busied myself in the technical aspects of my job and in team building, which for the most part went well. I also established a good working relationship with my direct line manager (Marketing Director, Europe and Africa), his line manager (head of the Business Development Group) and other colleagues within the BDG. As time went on, I became more involved in Country Audits (which involved assessment visits to all countries in the Segmentation project) and a funny thing happened. As in my days at MSAS, I found that the most difficult internal customers were the ones that I had felt the most comfortable with, in other words the British. At first I ascribed this to a rather awkward contact in London, but as time went on I realised that the situation was repeating itself. In other words the British can be objectionable, arrogant and difficult to manage. I was now seeing the British in the same way as many other Europeans do, despite my false consciousness.

On reflection, I can also now see that my own characteristics already carry these pejorative impressions without even taking into account people's prior expectations.

4.8 The International Americas

As part of the Segmentation project, I was sent to Mexico to ensure that the Segmentation project that they were running would not conflict with the possible Global roll out of our model.   Although, I was given a rather dramatic brief by my boss ("when you get there I want to see blood on the carpet") – although, this was a figurative instruction and not intended to be taken literally.

The Marketing Director in Mexico and I got on well and I ascertained that not only was there no conflict but that the two approaches were very similar conceptually. I enjoyed the trip and thought little more about it.

One day, I was corridor cruising (LeDuff, 1998) in Global Headquarters in Brussels and talking to an Irish colleague who worked in Finance, when the COO for the International Americas walked past, my old Country Manager from the UK. He saw us talking and cheerily asked "do you fancy working with me in Fort Lauderdale Mike" and suggested I come and see him for a chat sometime and then he walked off.

My colleague stared at me and asked incredulously if I had just been offered a job?

On later reconstructing the incident with another ex UK colleague, we worked out that the COO had passed by the office that I was in several minutes before he passed my colleague's (who was rated highly).   My job offer almost seemed to hinge on the fact that I had been the first one that the COO had seen! I would like to think that it was my personal skill set that was the deciding factor – but in all probability I will never know.

I soon found myself on a flight to Miami to discuss the position which was to be reporting to a new Commercial Director – the Mexican I had met previously.   To complete the Gently phenomena, I had a Nigerian colleague who I had worked with in the UK on the same flight. We sat together and he excitedly told me about the new rôle

that he was going over to discuss.   Halfway through our conversation his jaw dropped as the picture suddenly become clearer to him.   He had just realised that he was going to be working for me once more.

My team was the most internationally spread I had ever managed.   My Product Manager was Chilean, my Pricing Manager US American, as was one of my Market analysts. The Marketing Systems manager was Nigerian and I had a Puerto Rican Competitor Analyst.   I had a Cuban American secretary but I also had my Market Research manager based in Mexico City and my Product Development Manager based in Porto Allegre in Brasil.

The COO's secretary was also British and had (very briefly) also worked for me in London.

On reflection, it would seem that there were a number of individual career plans carried along on the wave of the successful COO, many of us had worked together before, admittedly, in the same company.   Not knowing how chance will be distributed seems to favour making friends before you need them.   Had I followed my Dutch line manager's advice a bit more literally and met my Mexican counterpart more combatively, it is very unlikely that I would have won this position.   I will refer in later sections as to the importance of making friends before you need them and the implications of the 'Gently' phenomena.

Not that I had any contact with the US Military whilst based in Fort Lauderdale, but I did find that they too, have a keen interest in something similar to Action Research, which they call After-Action Reviews (AARs).   The U.S. Army's use of AARs began in 1973, not as a knowledge-management tool but as a method to restore the values, integrity, and accountability that had diminished during the Vietnam War.

The start of the analysis asks the following questions:

♦ What was supposed to happen?

♦ What actually happened (the "ground truth")?

♦ What were the positive and negative factors here?

♦ What have we learned and how can we do better next time?

The US Army did not use this simply to tidy things up but, mainly to learn from what had actually gone wrong. Their conclusion was that flawed assumptions were the primary cause of failure, so very often it was the thinking process that needed improvement.

There are also a number of supplementary questions which logically follow on from the analysis

- What should the organization learn from this experience of what worked and did not work?
- What should be done differently in the future?
- Who needs to know these lessons and conclusions?
- Who will enter these lessons in the knowledge management system, or write the case up for future use?
- Who will bring these lessons into the leadership process for decision-making and planning?

(Sullivan & Harper, 1996)

I will elucidate more on this in later sections of this thesis, but the essential learning points that I take from this are firstly, the importance of critical reflection and secondly, bolting the stable door (albeit after these particular horses have fled).

4.8.1 Spoof Loss

One example of the DHL culture which was of typically Western (ie British, US American and Australian) culture, was the game played at the end of an internal dinner

event as to who was going to pay the bill. Under normal procedures and accounting conventions, the most senior person present should "pick up the tab". This is to avoid situations where one senior manager can invite others out 'on expenses' ask one of his/her subordinates to pay the bill and then authorise the expense claim later. This happened to me on many occasions – once at an extremely expensive restaurant for a senior management team dinner in Egham, Surrey. I was asked by the MD if I had my Amex credit card with me and on replying in the affirmative I was asked to pay a bill of £6k, this, I might add, was in the 1980s and there were only about 12 people in attendance; so £500 each. As we were all drinking vintage champagne and port this was scarcely surprising.

Luckily, some few weeks later following a rather spectacular award (presented by Princess Anne of the UK at an Industry dinner at the Brewery in Chiswell St, London) I took my (now ex-) Wife and my Colleague with his Wife to a very expensive restaurant near Reading (L'Ortolan). We spent a large amount on dinner and I (drunkenly) agreed to foot the bill. With much trepidation, I approached my boss a few day's later and asked very humbly if he would sign my expenses and explained that I had erred in the post-triumph euphoria and blown my expense allowance for the entire year. He laughed and said he could not complain as the largest item on my monthly expense claim was actually his (the £6k).

From my own observation at that time in the UK, this behaviour was neither abnormal nor considered unethical.

The regime in DHL was different. More professional, but also more fun. The guiding principle was that the most senior person present should pay, but there was a variation to this which was that on occasion (particularly if overseas DHL Guests were present) that the bill should be spoofed for. "Spoof" is a game where a number of coins are

concealed in the palm of one hand. The number can be any between 0 and 3. The game is played between multiple players. So, after dinner ten people can play this game with all taking turns to "call" or guess the total number of coins held by all players at the table. With ten players, the correct answer could be any value between zero and thirty. No player can select the same number as any preceding player. If you guess correctly, you are (thankfully) out of the game.

The game continues until there are only two people left. It is in a sense similar to poker – a game of bluff and counter bluff. It is also similar to the paper/rock/scissors game played in many playgrounds.[120]

Generally, I was quite good at this game although in a smaller group (4 to 5 people) the odds of losing were obviously higher and I would have to (humbly) approach my line manager with a large bill and explain that it was due to a Spoof Loss, invariably this was signed off without question.

However, things spiralled out of control at the Blue Moon Fish Company restaurant in Fort Lauderdale where I hosted a meeting of the Country Marketing Directors for the International Americas in the year 2000. There were about forty of us (the Caribbean had just the one Director) and there were 5 tables. Through a combination of bad luck, seating position and incompetence, I finished as the loser for our table. Worse was to follow with now only five "losers" left I ended up as in the final two. All was silent. Thirty eight pairs of eyes watched the final act of the play.

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[120] The game is actually quite complex and various algorithms have been proposed to develop a superior winning strategy. (Wittkamp & Barone, 2006, May), (Wittkamp, Barone, & While, 2007, April)

My boss sidled over to me and whispered in my ear "no pressure Mike, but if you lose this you are fired". This was a joke, but I knew he did not want the hit on his expense account which would limit his other activities for the rest of the year.

To my disbelief, my adversary called "four" when he had no coins in his hand, when the maximum possible answer was three. So I now had the next call. I had three coins in my hand and I called three. To my delight and relief, my opponent had no coins and hence the bill was his!

This (rather childish) game was actually a very effective shared team building experience. It also built on the DHL credentials of fun whilst removing some of the hierarchical barriers by putting all employees in a position where they could compete on equal terms.

Insight

4.9 Europe Revisited

Back to Europe for a variety of reasons. My (now ex) wife had been agitating for me to move back closer to home as she found my North Atlantic commute of two weeks in the US and a week in the UK too much like feast followed by famine. As luck would have it, my COO was also moving back to Brussels and asked three of his reports (who he had taken to with him to the United States) to return back with him. I was the only one to take up the offer, the other two stayed in the US. On reflection, keeping the job I had may well have been a sound move as the move back to Belgium (and subsequently back to the UK) were insufficient to save my marriage.

I was placed on an important project team to look at market adjacencies, which was both exciting and also positioned me extremely well for the next move up which was not long in coming.

I was ecstatic and felt I had now truly arrived, had I but known what was to follow…

I was now in charge of both Global Product Management and Product Development and for a brief period, things went extremely well for me. The fall soon followed. My ex COO and mentor who had looked a strong candidate for the CEO position quite suddenly announced that he was leaving. It had been clear to me from the start that I owed my new rôle to him and very shortly afterwards I was swapped out for another high flyer who was better connected to an extant senior board member.

On reflection, I can see that the failure of my Mentor to gain the CEO position was a truly critical incident for me. But one over which I had no control over and indeed no knowledge of until after the event. The consequences were significant. Had he gained the CEO position then I would have been ideally placed for possible future moves upwards.

On further reflection, I assess what I could have done differently to position myself more securely and in retrospect it is difficult to see what more I could have done. I had strong backing from my team, my networking was sound although, perhaps greater focus on my immediate line manager may have helped. I had no intention of coat tailing my way to the top but luck is sometimes referred to as Chance meeting Opportunity and I had grabbed at it when it came along.

There was a further critical moment between my arrival and departure. I was asked to sack my Secretary as she was not as young and pretty as the other ones and also smoked[121]. I consulted with a couple of close colleagues and asked for their advice. It was clear that she was efficient and experienced, but French rather than Dutch speaking.[122] The conclusion was that this was in actuality a test. Was I prepared to undertake orders without question? I decided to utilise a rational approach and demonstrate by some statistics gathered over the course of a few weeks on how efficient she actually was in reality. This was all rather nugatory. My successor, on his first day in the job unceremoniously sacked her. I had achieved nothing other than my own demise and the prolongation of her salary for one more month.

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[121] And this was the second time in my career where I had been asked to fire someone primarily because the Head of Department disapproved of smoking.

[122] Although theoretically DHL positioned itself as multi-cultural, I noted that both in DHL Malaysia and in Belgium, the tendency was for the nationality of the Head of Department to strongly influence the ethnic composition of that department. This appeared less clear cut in Fort Lauderdale.

This single event may have been the most critical of all that I have ever made.   I don't regret the decision but I now realise that I could have handled it in a far more efficacious manner.   To end someone's career based on another's personal dislike was abhorrent to me.   A better solution would to have been to engineer a transfer for her to another department fairly quickly, rather than stand and debate the issue.

> **Just prior to this episode, I had attended a DHL conference in Barcelona at which about 500 of the top DHL Country and Global executives attended.   One of the ideas which was propounded, was a (now discredited) McKinsey theory that we could improve the quality of our workforce by off-loading the poorest 10% of performers each year. I felt (from experience) that there was no guarantee that we could always successfully replace all of these individuals with superior models – simply because our interviewing/selection skills were not that good.   I wish I had spoken up at the time. On a more prosaic basis, even if this did work it would mean that mathematically the entire work force could turnover in 7 years.   Most of the conference delegates would be out of a job.**
>
> **My reluctance to voice my concerns was not only my own failure – it was also a contributing factor to Françoise losing her job.**
>
> ### *Insight*

My mistake was to see this simply as an ethical dilemma with only two possible choices.   There is, of course, no guarantee that this course of action would have been

successful. Human Resources would certainly have been difficult to convince, but at least, I would have increased my probability of survival.

To understand why my line manager acted as he did it is clear that the conference in Barcelona had a big impact. He was also new to the job and the company and thus presumably keen to impress at an early stage. When a new management theory is introduced into a company (e.g. TQM) it is important for the senior management to support it and for upwardly aspiring managers to subscribe to the new theory with enthusiasm. Hence his action was all too predictable. This is consistent with critical theory as described in Chapter 2, section 2.6.1 as it shows how the actions and consequences of those actions have to be understood in the context of management power relations (see for example Comstock (1982).

I was not the only person in this position, at that time the restructuring of DHL led to a large number of people having to either move country or face losing their job. Monique Blokzyl (an ex-colleague of mine) describes the end of her 15 year career, and the trauma of handing over the keys to her company car and walking out of the building for the last time (Blokzyl, 2013).

4.10 Homeward Bound

So, the end result was that I was transferred back to my point of origin, the UK. Luckily for me there was a need at that time for a General Manager of Marketing, I was

also lucky that the Commercial Director knew me and I had welcomed him into my department when he was a junior sales representative. The position was similar to my last rôle in the UK but, now my responsibilities were Product Development, Marketing Communications and Market Research in a larger entity.

Whilst I was in the UK, the DHL US operation (which had been losing money for many years) was handed the opportunity to add some extra volume following the acquisition of Airborne Express the third largest express carrier in the United States. Through my many contacts in Fort Lauderdale, I was kept well abreast of the developing story.[123] My own direct involvement was minimal. There was a small Airborne presence in London which was wholly absorbed into the DHL UK operation. I was, however, able to take advantage of a headcount opportunity and interviewed and offered a job to one of the staff there.

Securicor, a UK Domestic Road Express company, was acquired by Deutsche Post, a move that was mirrored throughout Europe with many Road Freight/Express operators being integrated into the new Deutsche Post group under the DHL brand. This was an interesting, challenging and ultimately depressing experience.

The senior management team was primarily Securicor who had little understanding of the Air Express business. The cultures clashed in much the same way as they had at MSAS and Jardine. A rather badly handled Sales force integration resulted in large scale Customer fall out and as results disappointed, marketing (and training) budgets were cut. Although the Red (i.e. Air Express) side of the business had 'hit budget' the previous year no bonuses were paid as it was thought to be too divisive. The annual

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[123] I have written more on this in the National University of Singapore/HELP University Case Study series The DHL/Airborne Express Acquisition (2013)

Employee satisfaction results were so bad that the Management Team decided to suppress the survey results and morale dropped even further. A chain of bloodletting then followed with, in sequence, me losing my job, my boss (the Commercial Director) losing his job, the Sales & Marketing Director soon followed, the Country Manager and finally, the COO. Sometime later the CEO Klaus Zumwinkel was also forced to resign following a tax evasion scandal in Germany. His number 2 had already had to leave following his failure to stem the losses in DHL US.[124]

Figure 4.6   Slaughter at DHL

The exodus of employees either voluntarily or forcibly, continued over the next few years. To complete the failure of the DHL Red & Blue integration in the UK the road based (i.e. Blue) part of the company was sold off in 2011 which unfortunately, created additional casualties.

For once, my luck had deserted me and at the same time my marriage also hit the rocks so I had the prospect of no job, no house and no car staring me in the face. So applying

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[124] National University of Singapore/HELP University Case Study series The DHL/Airborne Express Acquisition (2013).

the nil desperandum[125] principle, I decided to take a holiday and go and complete my Instrument Flight rating in Florida.

At the end of each year in my diary, I give myself a 12 month review. The first sentence of the review for 2005 showed the typical level of British understatement for what her Majesty the Queen may have more accurately described as my annus horibilis.

"Generally it has to be said that 2005 has not been a good year. I seem to have lost my wife, job and house almost simultaneously" (The Author, 2006)

Figure 4.7   Review of 2005   Source: The Author's Diary

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[125] Do not panic.

I do find that I do have a very marked tendency to over dramatise fairly minor aspects of my life, whilst underplaying far more important and sinister events. I can see this as a need for recognition and attention (on incidents of over dramatisation) and the need for personal space, grief and time to reflect on matters of more important personal and social issues.

More importantly, did I learn anything from these episodes? John Kotter (Kotter, 1995) identified amongst his MBA graduates that the most successful members of his class was their ability to turn terrible events – even their personal and family troubles – into growth experiences that make them stronger and more able. By not running away from tough times, and by reflecting on their experiences, they grow.

4.11 Reflections on Mergers and Acquisitions.

Predator	Target	Year	Management	Result
Rank Travel	Ellerman Sunflight	1983	Rank Travel	Duplication of Products and no real revenue gain.
MSAS	Jardine Air Cargo	1986	Ten Man Board in the UK, 5 selected from each entity	Culture Clash, Management attrition followed by loss of Customers
DHL	MSAS Express	1987	Complete absorption	Successful
Deutsche Post	DHL	2002 (completed)	Mixed	Mixed
DHL/Deutsche Post	Securicor (in the UK)	2001	Primarily Securicor	Customer Loss followed by Management attrition. Eventually the domestic (Securicor) business was sold off.
DHL/Deutsche Post	Airborne Express	2003	Primarily Airborne (in the United States)	Operational incompatibility did not help reduce financial losses. Eventually DHL withdrew from the US Domestic Market

Figure 4.8 Personal Assessment of Mergers and Acquisitions

So, of all of these acquisitions, the only two that appeared relatively successful were both small and involved complete absorption with no attempt to integrate culture, operations or systems.

The MSAS/Jardine acquisition proved strongly positive for me as did DHL/MSAS Express. The Rank Travel/Ellerman Sunflight and DHL/Airborne acquisitions had little direct impact, whilst the integration of DHL UK and Securicor was strongly negative.

Each of these events could be viewed as unpredictable events with consequences that could be favourable or unfavourable. But strong positioning and networking skills *before* the event increase the probability of the change being favourable.

These reflections help provide a context into the world in which I operated, and provide my own personal insight, but they also portray the wider significance of the business world. Taylor (1995) calls this "horizons of significance", in which the individual connections to larger social or political (or corporate) units are examined.

4.12 The Far East

For a variety of reasons, I was on an aeroplane winging its way from London Heathrow to Kuala Lumpur the capital of Malaysia. Everything I knew and held dear was now behind me. The house and my car had been sold, my Wife had, as they say, moved on and my Children newly fledged from University, had flown the nest just before the winds of change had blown it down.

This was a gamble for me. No commuting type rôle here – I was here, several thousand kilometres from home, with only one trip back a year to look forward to.

In terms of psychological stress it is said that losing a partner, moving house and changing job are at the top of the list for precipitating heart attacks. I had managed all three, whilst simultaneously leaving all of my friends and family behind and also having to adapt to a completely new culture. The only constant was DHL. And that too, was soon to be gone.

As usual, I would like to say that I adapted well to the change, as decades of practice in this area stood me in good stead. I joined a flying club, found a local dojo where I could continue with Karate and mixed with my new work colleagues. I was lucky in

that I found two who I had worked with in London, and more incredibly, one Liverpuddlian and one Italian that I had worked with previously in Fort Lauderdale.

The first hiccup had occurred before I even got on the plane. The Country Manager who had recruited me (and indeed sold me on the idea of Malaysia) had already moved on to another assignment. On reflection I now realise that this should have raised a red flag immediately. A new boss (i.e. one that has not hired you) bears you no allegiance and may even have something to gain by sweeping the company with a fresh broom, as I had found out whilst at Wings Holidays. I had now lost my biggest political ally. Being an expensive ex-pat in a country that bears a certain antipathy towards its past colonial masters is always going to be a precarious position.

Initially, all went well, I had a strong supportive team, got on well with the rest of the management team and the company were doing well.
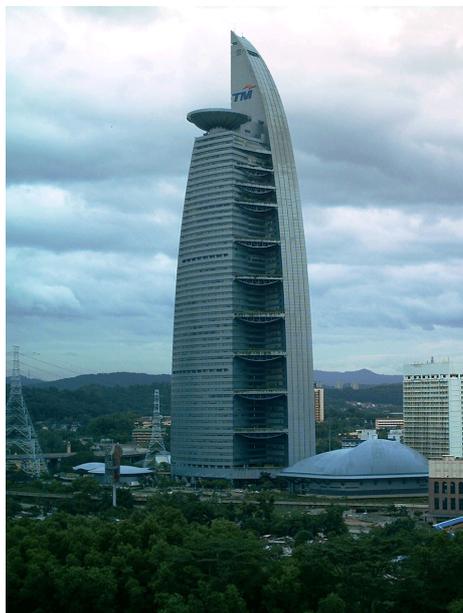
Figure 4.9 My office was on the 27th Floor of Menara TM in Kuala Lumpur

When, after an interregnum of several months, the new Country Manager arrived things did start to change. The work ethic started to dominate my work/life balance. I

remember working on a price increase with several others of my team until well after midnight with the Country Manager impatiently waiting for a result (which I thought to be of purely academic interest and a complete waste of everybody's time). As time went on and we got closer to the number we were looking for I received a text from a friend in the UK wishing me 'Happy Birthday'. I had not realised that it was now after two o'clock in the morning and the day of my birthday, the 11th of July. The Country Manager was all for re-running the programme as he was new and did not want to make a mistake on a fairly high profile decision but when told that that would take another 3 hours to calculate, decided against as we had to be back at work by 7am the next morning to work on the presentation for the 10am teleconference with Regional Office in Singapore. Work had ceased to become fun.

I had known that that my line manager was previously employed by DHL in South Korea, and that that country was renowned for hard working and long hours, but perhaps I had not recognised how extreme their culture was. Surdej (2015) describes the fourteen hour working day and the belief in complete obedience to superiors. Having come from this background it is easy to see how this behaviour might have seem quite normal to him.

As I have mentioned earlier 'Fun' is probably more important to the British than many other nationalities and is reflected in many descriptions of their national characteristics. And again, it is true, a fortiori, for myself. Culturally in South East Asia the Chinese work ethic is far more work focused, possibly to the detriment of the quality of life.

There was another incident that was a good learning experience for me which relates to Culture. I was asked to organise a gift to present to our most important customers at the opening of a new Service Centre located in a major manufacturing city in the north of Malaysia. The vast majority of the citizens of the city being Malaysian Chinese. The gift I selected was a rather nice barometer/clock in dark wood. It was only very late in the day (fortunately before the event) that I was informed by my boss that giving any kind of time piece to a Chinese businessman or woman meant that their time was up and that you wanted them to die !

On re-analysing this mistake, I still find it difficult to see exactly what I could have done differently. The manager responsible was herself a (young) Chinese Malaysian and she was unaware of this shibboleth. Books such as "Gifts, Favors and Banquets: The Art of Social Relations in China" (Yang, 1994) or "The Etiquette and Customs Attached to the Presentation of Gifts" (Xu, 1990) might have been good places to start.

Figure 4.10   Baroness Kramer the British Minister of Transport presenting a watch to the Mayor of Taipei in January 2015

I had undergone a one week cultural immersion programme early on (at my request) but this was with a Malay family and I knew little of Chinese customs at that time. Indeed I had not realised that there were such large cultural differences between the Malaysian Chinese, Malays and Malaysian Indians as described by Lim (1998) and Hofstede & Bond (1988). One of the dangers of aggregating Hofstede's data for any one country, is that some of the key differences get "averaged" out (Sondergaard, 1994)

I was under pressure to produce results early on but perhaps, I could have found more time to read about the history of the country. Many books on multi-cultural management will focus on the major faux pas to be avoided but, in truth, there are so many that it is impossible to avoid them all. The coping strategy in my experience is to be as open and as honest as possible and clearly indicate that no harm was intended. There is, however, a certain randomness to this. I have seen Marketeers instantly lose their jobs over ill thought out actions that immediately impacted on either the Customer or the Public Image of the company. There is also a limit to which it is possible to regularly check with other colleagues as to the wisdom of certain decisions without appearing incompetent. In the example I cited above, there was nothing in the context or my prior history to rank this as anything other than a routine low risk decision.

There were a number of significant personal characteristics differences between my line manager and myself (which was also repeated with the Regional Director). My style was team driven with decision making authority and responsibility given to those who needed it. The Chinese Malaysian[126] style of micro-management and total respect for authority was anathema to me.

After a year of increasing acrimony, I was asked to resign[127].

I was told some time later that I was viewed as a threat, although this may be apocryphal. However, as an expensive, well connected ex-pat this could possibly be the case. Certainly organizations are believed by Jackall (1988) and Prassad (1997) to be filled with intense interpersonal competition, severe management battles and masked politics of executive intrigue

[126] On Geert Hofstede's Power Dimension (Hofstede G. , 1991) Malaysia currently scores the highest of all countries measured.

[127] Which was not as painful as it sounds as it did come with a reasonable "goodbye" payment.

As before, I took a long holiday, travelled around South East Asia and added another string to my bow with a Commercial Pilot's Licence and Flight Instructor Rating. This took quite a lot of time and study as well as quite a lot of money which could in no way be justified on any Internal Rate of Return calculation. It was, however, most satisfying and stretched my skill set in yet another direction hence meeting one of my life's Goals of regular reinvention. It may also have been a period where I could subconsciously adjust to the shock and recreate a version of recent history where my ego suffers less. Frank (1995) refers to this as "reflexive monitoring".

Once again, on further reflection, I realise that this is a very typical reaction for me. In the event of any stressful or traumatic event, I would rapidly seal the memory away and forget about it (usually very successfully) until I felt able to re-open the box once more and prod the contents. I would certainly not agonise over it nor enter into a depressive downward cycle. As a coping strategy I feel that this has much to recommend it; and it has worked for me in a number of major disappointments. This is termed autobiographical memory suppression (Hermans, Defranc, Raes, Williams, & Eelen, 2005). Repression was viewed by Freud as a psychic process, often developed during childhood to cope with traumatic stress. Whether this could be attributed to my parents' divorce when I was aged 13, is impossible for me to say. The apparent danger concomitant with this coping strategy is that firstly, other dysphoric issues may rush to fill the gap and secondly, at later stressful moments the bad memories may flood back in (Dalgleish & Yiend, 2006). I can, however, attest that this has not occurred in my case.

4.13 Full Circle – And back to Academia

"Do not try to satisfy your vanity by teaching a great many things. Awaken people's curiosity. It is enough to open minds; do not overload them. Put there a spark. If there is some good inflammable stuff, it will catch fire"

Annatole France (1844 -1924)

I learned a good lesson whilst teaching Economics on the Institute of Works Managers course at Basingstoke Technical College back in 1980. At first, I diligently attempted to race through the entire syllabus – regardless of whether my Students were able to adequately internalise it. Then, I realised that it was far better to make sure that they did understand what I covered – even if that meant some areas were left untouched. Finally I realised that really the most important thing was to make it seem interesting and relevant. As at school, people will do well in the subjects that they are interested in. The course was for their benefit – not for mine.

From Queen Mary College (University of London) in 1980, my next teaching appointment was at the International Islamic University of Malaysia (UIAM) in 2008 nearly 30 years later. I chanced to meet Professor Khaliq after a CIM meeting on market segmentation, which luckily, I happened to know a little about and he asked me if I was interested in a teaching rôle. It was only for one Semester teaching on the MBA programme but, it was the fresh start that I needed for what was the beginning of my portfolio career.[128]

One of the striking features of the new millennium has been that of Islam. And I am not referring to the Twin Towers, revolution in the Middle East nor the Palestinian issue. I am referring to the recognition of both the size and distribution of the Muslim market (Temporal, 2011). Halal food and Islamic banking have become interesting

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[128] I had first been introduced to the idea of the Portfolio career by Professor Charles Handy at London Business School.

quirks in the Marketeer's landscape but more fundamental is the realisation of how rapidly Islam is growing. By 2050, about one third of the World's population will be Muslim (as estimated by the United Nations Population Fund in 2010).   Many will not be in Indonesia, South Asia or North Africa but in Europe, Russia, China and the United States.   Mainly because of my exposure to Islam in Malaysia (and having a Muslim as a flat mate) it has developed into one of my major research interests. (Khaliq, Rustam, & Dent, 2011)

 It was only for one Semester teaching on the MBA programme but, from there I was able to gain a one year visiting lectureship at Universiti Malaya, where again I taught on the MBA programme. It was there that I met Dr Edward Wong and whilst discussing PhDs in a Faculty of Business & Accountancy monthly meeting he mentioned a very different type of PhD; the Living Thesis (Wong E. S., 2003). Intrigued, I decided to read a little more about it.

Shortly thereafter I was interviewed for a Senior Lecturer's position in the Centre for International Programmes at HELP University College (as it was then before gaining full University status in 2012).   This involved teaching on MBA programmes in Kuala Lumpur, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City with scope for additional countries in due course and so, was an ideal counterpoint for my wanderlust.

4.14 Further Reflections Utilising Dream Analysis

Exactly what dreams are made of and what purpose they serve is still not clear (Jung, 1983) .   We know that they may reflect worries, concerns, recent events, desires and all manner of things which we may not be consciously aware of.   Therefore, as a device they can be used to discern certain patterns of behaviour or concerns which may not otherwise be visible.   Taylor (1993) refers to dreams as wellsprings of the unconscious,

so in this I hope to add a richer understanding of what could be described as my aesthetic intelligence.

I have kept a log of my dreams for some time and can identify some common themes. One of these themes is of being poorly prepared, afraid of being uncovered as a charlatan and yet finally producing a very good piece of work and turning failure into success.

Many of my earlier dreams featured the ability to fly (a fairly common theme for many people) and this has been modified by my own experiences as a Commercial Pilot. I mention this now to add some additional understanding to the three examples I give below.

4.14.1 Dream 1

I dreamt that I was in a room working at DHL with many others. Then, a call came to say that the CEO wanted me to present to the full Deutsche Post Board. I had not realised that I was due on and had nothing prepared. I was barefoot and went into the Board Meeting which was discussing Game Theory. I thought at first that I would be OK but, the financials were very complicated and I was scared that it was all about to go badly wrong. However, eventually I was able to swing the meeting around more under my control. I asked the Group to try to work out what the likely Competitors response would be and why. By the end of the meeting, I was very relaxed and leaning up against the wall as I ran the group.

The theme of being barefoot also appears regularly in my dreams, on this occasion I was sleeping on a very small bed at my Sister's house and my bare feet were sticking out from under the duvet and touching the (cold) wooden wardrobe and the foot of the

bed.   However, I think the underlying metaphor is that of unpreparedness. Understanding what a Competitor would do and why was something that my Country Manager in the UK had trained me to do and I believe this to be one of my strong points.   Once I had steered the group onto a topic on which I was relatively (to them at least) an expert I could manage far more successfully.   This has been referred to as the Zulu Principle.

> *"This [was]… an idea I had after observing my wife read a four-page article in Reader's Digest on the subject of Zulus. As a result, within a few minutes she knew more than I did about Zulus and it occurred to me that, if she had then borrowed all the available books on Zulus from the local library, she would have become the leading expert in the county. If she has subsequently been invited to stay on a Zulu kraal (by an unsuspecting chief) and read about the history of Zulus at Johannesburg University for another six months, she would have become one of the leading experts in the world.*
>
> *The key point is that my wife would have applied a disproportionate effort to becoming relatively expert in a very narrow subject. She would have used a laser beam rather than a scattergun and her intellectual and other resources would, in that narrow context, have been used to maximum advantage… That way, you will become relatively expert in your chosen area. It is only necessary to be six inches taller than the other people in a room to see above everyone's heads. Applying The Zulu Principle helps you grow these extra six inches."*

(Slater, 1992)

4.14.2 Dream 2

I dreamt that I had to attend a presentation at DHL but, when I got there I found out that I was actually expected to give the presentation (even although I had already left the company by then). I asked for half an hour to find some material, but I had handed my laptop back and had nothing. I eventually found an old McKinsey presentation and ad-libbed through that. The topic was innovative approaches to current work practices.

Once again, I am unprepared – but the topic is that of kaizen or continuous improvement which suggests that this is something that is always at the back of my

mind. McKinsey's was the Management Consultancy most closely associated with DHL during the early 2000s. Yet again I am able to conjure a silk purse out of a sow's ear.

4.14.3 Dream 3

This is a fairly recent dream and contains references which seem to relate to my previous position at HELP University.

I dreamt that I was cycling to work and an aeroplane flew very low overhead towards the airport. It landed (i.e. crashed) short of the runway and then ploughed along the runway, using a pair of infra-red binoculars. I was able to see the plane gouging a deep furrow on the runway and bits of the plane breaking away. I realised that the traffic would now be terrible and decided not to go into the office as I had intended but instead just go directly to my first appointment (and therefore presumably not checking with my diary/notes what the meeting was about). On arrival, I passed a group of men who I deduced to be DBA students by listening to their conversation.

I thought I was just meant to meet someone for a preliminary meeting but then to my horror I discovered that I was expected to give a three hour lecture on Logistics to the DBA class! My feet had got wet on the cycle ride so I had taken off my socks. My Laptop was not with me and I had no presentational materials.

I put on my shoes and thought about what I should talk about and soon found that I had a very clear idea. I was able to talk through the main topic areas without difficulty and had no problem managing the class.

I did cycle to work both in the UK and in Belgium, both fairly close to the airport, getting wet socks was a risk but I always had a fresh pair with me or at the office.

Once again I am able, with some time to think through the problem, to come up with a cogent plan which proves successful.

4.14.4 Further Reflections on Dreaming

The situations described above seem to follow a common theme. Unpreparedness, fear of failure and eventual triumph. Perhaps, not that unique but they do provide an insight into my modus operandi, inner fears and desire for success. This desire for success is what Freud (2010) termed *Wunscherfüllung*, or wish fulfilment and is an essential element of all dreams according to his theory.

They are also quite accurate as I have experienced these situations (minus the wet, bare feet fortunately). I was once asked at very short notice (about an hour) to deputise for my Manager at a School event and when asked what I had to do, I was told I just had to appear and represent DHL. I arrived with a colleague and was met with great pomp and ceremony at the School gate. I was told that I was late and that everyone was waiting for me. I was ushered into a room through a curtain and discovered myself on a stage in front of an audience of about 300 pupils. I was then told that I should say a few words, I enquired as to how long I should talk for and was told that they had scheduled an hour.[129]

I had no time to be nervous and no time to prepare. To this day, I cannot really remember what I talked about, but I remember my colleague being astonished at how well I did and it seemed to be well received by my audience.

Chapter 5 is my final reprise and seeks to bring to a conclusion the outputs of my meta-data matrix.

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[129] If I am to speak ten minutes, I need a week for preparation; if fifteen minutes, three days; if half an hour, two days; if an hour, I am ready now. (Woodrow Wilson, US President 1856-1924))

CHAPTER 5   CONCLUSION

5.0 Final Conclusions

This final section is the final distillation of my lived experiences and seeks to identify common themes that have revealed themselves to me during my application of multiple cycles of self-reflection.   As such it seeks to identify the main learning points that have come out of my published papers and my research. I identify the rôle of critical events on one's career, the complex interaction of luck, tacit knowledge and fluid intelligence in determining one's success or otherwise.   I contend that Organizations have no soul, and yet organizational politics, dress codes and religion are all major variables that can impact individuals and groups of workers.   I include a section on limitations and recommendations for further research.   I then conclude with a final chapter summary, which adds a further layer of reflection on the process that I have undertaken.

5.1 Critical Events

At any one time, some events seem quite momentous and others fairly insignificant. However, on reflection it becomes clearer that some that seemed insignificant were seminal and other momentous events merely shooting stars. These are also sometimes termed critical moments of decision (Williams C. M., 1999).   I would differentiate between critical moments, which I see as key decision nodes in one's life or career and critical events or incidents[130] which relate to a change in one's external environment which result in a significant impact on one's planned or expected future.

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[130] Smears (2009) uses the term incident to describe a debilitating cycle accident and the impact on her career.

Although the term 'moment' suggests a very short timescale it is clear that many decisions do not have to be made instantaneously. However, in the heat of a meeting the importance of tacit knowledge or experience is key, knowing when to act and when to think more deeply (van Manen, 1995). As I have already revealed my personality tends to favour the latter and my weakness is in not taking action when required and if I am forced to take action I will generally reduce the possible solutions to fairly simplistic (rather than creative) and limited options.

The academic success of the IBM Scholarship was surely a driver towards my subsequent interest in further education and the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. Similarly, the breakup of my marriage coming at the same time as my job in the UK disappeared was a catalyst for a long yearned for sojourn in the Far East. Less obvious perhaps was the failure of my COO to obtain the top CEO position, the impact on my career was strongly negative and had he stayed with the company it is possible that I could have enjoyed significant upside career risk. Had he actually become the CEO, then the prospects may have been even brighter.

Apart from the critical events in my own career, I have also been witness to many critical events in other people's careers. It is not my purpose to critically analyse the mistakes of others but I will make reference to one type of event which, so far, I have not yet succumbed to. That is the seductive path of telling a lie to avoid potential embarrassment but then becoming dragged into further elaboration and subsequently the risk of exposure.

I will cite three examples, two in the UK and one in Singapore. The first two, whilst understandable resulted in immediate dismissal. The third was technical and only used in order to provide a plausible justification for dismissal.

Case 1 was a young, popular accountant whose wife also worked for the same company. He sat for the final papers of a professional accountancy qualification but failed. Rather than admit to this he told work colleagues that he had passed. Some time later the results were published in a national broadsheet. Noticing that his name was not listed, the Finance Director contacted the newspaper to ask them to correct this omission. Needless to say the truth then unfolded and the unfortunate accountant was fired – not for failing but for lying to his Manager.

Case 2 was a popular young salesman appointed to his first position in Operational management. He lost his licence as a result of drink driving which precedent had shown was not sufficient justification for dismissal. On hearing of this, the Area Director travelled to meet him and asked if there was any truth in the rumours. This was denied and the Area Director returned satisfied with the response. Sadly of course the truth was eventually revealed and the Area Director (very reluctantly) was forced to dismiss one of his rising stars.

Case 3 was completely different. A senior Director was found guilty of padding his expenses, which depending on how you look at it could be viewed as a relatively minor transgression. However, the methodology by which this was obtained was by examining all his expense claims over an extended period (8 to 12 months) looking for any anomalies. The evidence was used in order to force his resignation.

This last case is worrying. There are very few (I would surmise) people in corporate life who have always been 100% accurate in their expense claims throughout their career. I do admit, that I used to use a discount travel card to buy a second class rail ticket on a regular basis from Basingstoke to London when I was entitled (and indeed, claimed for) first class travel. I did not see any moral dilemma in this at that time, and indeed still do not. No one was harmed, I was entitled to the 1st Class travel but if I

was prepared to risk having to stand for the journey (as was common on British Rail at the time) then that was my sacrifice.   After about one year I was unlucky enough to meet my boss on the return journey to Basingstoke.   Ridden with guilt, I tried to envisage how I could explain myself to a ticket inspector when he discovered I was sitting in a first class carriage with a discounted second class ticket and what the consequences would be once my boss discovered my deception.   To my relief, instead of heading directly to a first class carriage he asked me if I fancied a drink in the buffet car. I accepted with alacrity as this would at least provide me with a stay of execution on the forty five minute journey.   The relief that flooded over me some twenty minutes later when he suggested a second beer, was palpable.

On reflecting on my narrow escape the next day, I considered how my manager had acted.   It was a nice and friendly gesture (and he was indeed a team orientated and personable manager) but in all probability, I now suspect that he had also bought a second class ticket.

Clearly this demonstrates that rather than accepting the run of events there were many other options available to me.   I could have suggested the buffet car myself, or claimed to have forgotten something then caught the next train, invented an imaginary friend that I was meeting in Coach X etc.

More fundamentally, Case 3 demonstrates the risk of any evidence that may place you in a bad light may be ruthlessly used by internal adversaries given sufficient opportunity.

5.2 Serendipity or the Science of being Lucky

"Dans les champs de l'observation le hasard ne favorise que les esprits prepares."

(Pasteur, 1854)

As discussed in my reflections in Chapter 2, I now realise that tacit knowledge is of critical importance, far more so than qualifications or time served in a particular rôle. The ability to anticipate the moves of others is the key to being in the right place at the right time. Many would describe this as luck, but I would reply that in many cases people (to a large extent) can make their own luck. Bourdieu in "Le Sens Pratique" (1990) described the term 'habitus' which he said was embodied history, or in more simple words; learning from mistakes, a.k.a. tacit knowledge, even perhaps, latent skill ?

I have been described by many people as a very lucky person. And I do agree that, for the most part, life has treated me most kindly. The important question, is why have I been lucky? When being accused of being lucky, a golfer famously replied "Yes, I am, and the funny thing is that the more I practice, the luckier I get"[131]. In other words, experience and practice are slightly improving the probability of success. Indeed skill and talent can often be seen to be subordinate to practice (Syed, 2010).

So, have I been able to flex the odds slightly in my favour? I am a great believer in serendipity and indeed used to talk about the science of being lucky when running Yield Management seminars within the Express delivery industry. I explained that by focusing on particular groups of customers, we could slightly shift the probabilities of any one customer receiving a delivery, whilst simultaneously requiring a pick up. This

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[131] Often misattributed to the US Golfer Gary Player.

serendipitous state of affairs would negate one set of costs and magically increase our profitability at a stroke.

Similarly on reflection, I can see that I have been lucky in my dealings with others where I have created a good impression which served me well many years later.   One was with the Mexican Marketing Director (who I could easily have alienated given my rôle at that time) who later offered me a position in the United States.   Another two occasions were with junior staff who I treated well and both later moved up into high positions in the organisation and both offered me good jobs when I was in need (one in the UK and one in Malaysia).   One of the Agency planners gave me some advice early in my career – make friends before you need them.   I think this has to be one of my key learning points from my own reflections.

The counterpoint to this, would be the danger of a new line manager – particularly one that does not know you, has no loyalty to you and may have conflicting (personal) objectives.   In my case, this has proved to my detriment on three separate occasions (once in the UK, once in Belgium and once in Malaysia).   Whilst this is unsurprising, the learning point is identical to the one above. Make friends before you need them. The difference is similar to that of between opportunities and threats.   Maximising opportunities and minimising threats would be the mantra.   Both require maintaining strong networks and creating favourable impressions but the latter may require more of an external rather than internal focus.   After many years in not only the same industry (which was initself consolidating) but also in the same company, I found that my external networks were actually quite weak.   In retrospect I should have been more active with the Chartered Institute of Marketing and certainly monitored external job opportunities more closely.   Networking and taking advantage of the Gently phenomenon could have proved serendipitous.

5.3 Politics

Politics begins as soon as the group number exceeds two. I regard myself as an Economist first and foremost, yet the discipline is inextricably linked with both Philosophy and Politics, indeed in many major Universities it is taught as PP&E (Politics, Philosophy and Economics). Two of my first line managers in the AA were PP&E graduates from Oxford and now the University at which I recently taught at is now looking to introduce such a course. Many advanced countries (e.g. France & Sweden) focus far more on Philosophy, History and Social Science, (The Economist) (2013, Nov. 2nd). The downside is that industry complains about the lack of technical skills and the inadequacy of young graduates for the employment market. This of course, begs the question – is it the needs of industry which are primus inter pares or should the needs of society rank higher?

Much of this thesis can be regarded as within the environs of Philosophy and I can advance little in the theory of Political Economy, yet politics are a key success factor in the Corporate world. It has long been recognised that commercial success is less important than the *appearance* of commercial success. In this lies a paradox – namely that most of a managers work, effort and achievements are hidden from his/her line manager[132]. This may be due to the technical expertise/interest of the line manager, and the higher one climbs up the corporate ladder the lower the probability that the line manager will have any recent experience in any particular field.

The view that any line manager will have of his direct reports can be envisioned within the iceberg theory. Namely that certain key attributes, achievements, failures etc. are only visible at a surface level, and that much like an Iceberg 90% of the iceberg remains

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[132] This is frequently referred to as the Iceberg principle (or theory of omission) after Ernest Hemmingway. Much of any individual's contribution is out of sight of his/her direct line manager.

below the surface and hidden.   I would submit that corporate success depends on maximising visibility of successes and camouflaging failures.   Indeed I was fortunate in having one particular line manager who was particularly competent in this area. On his bookshelf he had but few books, but one was Machiavelli – The Prince.

I would add to the Iceberg theory one extra dimension.   And that is the background/experience of the line manager.   Having a background in IT or HR or Operations etc. will mean that direct reports in these functions can expect a more comprehensive examination of their strategies and day to day activities than their colleagues.   Similarly, any line manager is likely to be slightly harder on the discipline s/he graduated from.

Initially, in the first few managerial positions that I held I did indeed enjoy the direction of a line manager who knew far more about my area of expertise, but in MSAS, for the first (and only a brief) time I was managed by someone with a different area of expertise and who had also no knowledge of my functional area.   By chance this worked well (from my perspective) as I had far greater control over my fiefdom and little interference.   On the other hand my opportunities for learning were restricted in one dimension, although clearly, I had opportunities to learn in other areas.

5.4 Organizations.

So what has this taught me about Organizations and the people that work in them? Are they all cold hearted apparatchiks that deserve to be first up against the wall when the revolution comes (Adams, 1979)? Or are they the true future of society, with Corporate Social Responsibility programmes, Community Leadership and Employee Welfare all held deeply to heart?

Well of course, Organizations have culture, core values, mission & vision statements etc. But much of the perceived reality of an organisation from the employee perspective is heavily coloured by their line manager.   Some are good and inspirational, some are automatons who follow orders and whose only concern is their own career interest. I have worked for both.

For the most part, I believe that Organizations do not have a soul.   They are like the Jungle, as described in the book, *The Jungle is Neutral* (1948). This was written in Malaya by a Briton (Freddie Spencer Chapman) regarding his experiences in the 2nd World War. And I of course now reside in Malaysia, so there is much resonance in this for me.   A manager may or may not have a soul, but this is not to be confused with the organisation. This is not to say that Organizations do not impact on morality, accepted business practices inculcate employees who in turn will influence others in the company (Clegg, Kornberger, & Rhodes, 2007).

Organizations do not have a soul;   They are also like the Mountain, (Murray, 1951).   I find this apposite, as I am also a Scot who enjoys hill climbing.[133]   Murray wrote his first book on toilet paper in a variety of German Prisoner of War Camps. And when the Guards discovered and destroyed his first manuscript he simply started again. I too

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[133] Somewhat bizarrely it was also published by Dent in the year of my birth and my middle name is Murray.

have this drive to complete what I have started. I sometimes wonder if I am demonstrating obsessive-compulsive disorder or 'bounceability' (Syed, 2010) ? I prefer to believe the latter. Either way, it helped him to survive. As I mention in my own Brand Map, I believe 'Bounceability' to be one of my few key competencies.

So what am I saying here? What I am trying to impart is that Organisations are like mountains, jungles, stones, the snow and all manner of things. Imputing morality on a Company is like blaming the sun for sunstroke or the traffic for making you late for work. It only seems that it is conspiring against you. The reality is that it neither knows nor cares about you. Your paranoia is of no concern. This uncaring characteristic of life was identified by Schopenhauer in his seminal work "The World as Will and Representation". I am not aware of any writers who have attributed this characteristic to organizations. The debate (such as it is) relates around the topic of organizational consciousness and this in turn seems to be defined in terms of either the founders/owners or the management team (Pruzan, 2001).

This does not mean that Corporate leaders can escape responsibility for their actions. They are the architects, the visionaries, the writers of mission & vision statements, business plans and more importantly the planters of the seeds of moral values for the organization. Moreover, it is the role of the manager to take into consideration moral, economic and economic conditions as their decisions impact greatly on these areas (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992).

As any organization grows it becomes progressively more and more difficult to impute one's desired values onto the core. In fact, the Organization starts to take on a life of its' own. How it grows from there is subject to providence as much as active direction, as many a political leader (e.g. Maximilien de Robespierre during the French revolution) have discovered to their cost.

I can identify one corporate leader who is constantly trying to raise awareness of the Corporate mission and values. He personally interviews all of the key new recruits to ensure organisational fit and communicates his values to all staff as often as he can. But in a large, widely spread and disparate academic community, this is a thankless task. He is a particularly good exemplar of the right behaviours but in terms of shaping the missiles course, it may all be rather cosmetic. The true direction is driven by his appointed lieutenants. They may or may not bear the same values. Sad but true.

It is admittedly hard for any individual to swim against the tide and the implicit threat of a black spot on one's curriculum vitae is frequently sufficient to push employees into immoral activities. However, each individual bears a collective responsibility for their fellow workers and it is my responsibility to identify this as a highly problematical contemporary issue.

Hence, there are no ethical get out clauses. It is all down to the individual to determine their own moral standards and as to exactly where they choose to draw a line beyond which they will not go.

5.5 Organizational Memory

Having worked in several different organizations for relatively long periods of time, I have noted how poor they actually are at maintaining their own history. The AA was good at some aspects of this and indeed published a number of retrospective (rather glowing) analyses of their path from the defender of the motorist, to the large commercial organization that it is today. It was not so good at the management level, however. Whilst a junior market analyst at the AA with responsibility for forecasting New Member recruitment I worked on a pre-existing Lotus 123 spreadsheet on a simple regression model. One of the key independent variables was the number of New Car Registrations in the UK. After some time in the department (which had suffered a significant turnover of staff prior to my arrival) I deduced that rather than undertake the task of estimating (a.k.a. guessing) the number of New Car Registrations I should look to a source that had a better understanding of this market than myself. Accordingly I asked for and was granted an appointment with Wilf Bucknall, Chief Economist of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders. On arrival, I commenced by describing my problem, to which he cut me short and told me that he well understood my problem and asked me if I worked with a lady called Maureen? Armed with the data that I sought, I returned to Fanum House and asked if anyone knew who Maureen was? It turned out that she was my direct predecessor in my rôle as Market Analyst in the Market Planning Department. So my clever idea was not new at all. More surprisingly, none of my colleagues were aware that this was how Maureen had developed her forecasts.

The concept of Organizational memory has been covered by Roth & Kleiner (Developing Organizational Memory through Learning Histories, 1998) Bradbury & Mainemelis (2001) and Roth & Bradbury (2008) and it does appear to me, from my

experience that much knowledge does indeed pour out through the cracks. Whilst at Wings Holidays, we religiously maintained a Guard Book which contained all of our press advertisements. Following the acquisition by Horizon I am certain that this would have been lost (or archived, which through time has much the same result). I suspect that this is true *a fortiori* in many acquisitions or take overs, particularly when personnel change buildings. When MSAS acquired the Jardine building close to Heathrow airport I was shocked at how much artwork, engraved windows and other materials were unceremoniously disposed of. One such item was the contract between Jardine Air Express (of which I later became General Manager) and Hong Kong Couriers, the existence of this contract was unknown until we attempted (unsuccessfully) to sever the relationship. As a result, we had to continue serving inbound shipments for a further 6 months despite having sold the outbound aspect of the operation to DHL.

As time moved on and I gained more experience in DHL, I increasingly found (along with my colleagues Tim Roberts and Chris Wright) that I was becoming a well known repository of knowledge. Increasingly, when asked to advise on older or more esoteric products[134] I was found to be one of the few that could answer questions from the Sales Force or other Countries. Following the wholesale departure of much of the senior management described earlier in this thesis I found that even fewer of us were knowledgeable enough to field these questions. This is clearly not the same thing as tacit knowledge but it is born of the same genesis, i.e. experience. But I do feel that the understanding of an organization's history is important, if mistakes are not to be repeated. This rôle that I fulfilled I believe to be a useful one and perhaps the story telling element is also an important feature of this rôle, cf. Gearty (2008).

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[134] Satellite Express (SATX), Mango Express & Wine Express amongst others.

5.6 Beards, Moustaches & Long Hair

I have flown aeroplanes with short hair and I have flown aeroplanes with long hair.
But I have never been able to discern the difference (anon).

Improving my professional practice surely cannot hinge on anything so basic as my quantum of hirsuteness?

Back in Chapter 2, I explained how a Brand Map can be used as at an individual level.[135]   There are a number of perceptual shifts that may be required to achieve the desired positioning. Rational and Emotional needs have to be met and a clear value position has to be selected.   But wait, there is one thing more – substantiators. Substantiators are the physical evidence sometimes referred to as one of the 7Ps in the Service Marketing Mix.   I often relate the following example of this "P" of Physical Evidence in my undergraduate Branding class;

I had booked a very nice and upmarket restaurant for dinner with my then (now ex-) Wife, as it was our wedding anniversary I had requested a bottle of champagne on ice when we arrived.   We had barely sat down and my Wife announced that we were leaving! Slightly shell shocked, I paid the bill (which included a cover charge although we had not eaten anything) and hurried after.

The explanation was damning. The table cloths were dirty!

As a Marketeer I clearly understood what this meant – if the restaurant could not keep the table cloths clean (which were in full public view) then what level of cleanliness could one ascribe to the kitchen? (Actually at the time I thought no such thing, it is now only on reflection that I clearly understand, at the time, I merely thought my wife was being irrational).

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[135] Tom Peters was probably the first person to suggest this.

Substantiators (or physical evidence) provide a reason to believe. With a positive substantiator the desired message is re-inforced. With a negative substantiator, the message is undermined.   To give but one example; the primary concern of aeroplane passengers is *Safety*. In order to substantiate the belief that the airline is safe, it is essential that the passengers believe the Captain to be skilled, capable and professional. This vision is best maintained by crisp white shirts, absence of facial hair, a uniform, a cap and stripes on the epaulettes.   Casual wear, tattoos, earrings and long hair would be guaranteed to create concern amongst not only the passengers but also the rest of the flight crew.

A dramatic example of inappropriate dress was the rather sad case of Michael Foot at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday in November 1981.   Although he wore what he was comfortable with (a duffle coat) he was pilloried by the popular press for not showing the correct level of respect to "the fallen".

This is reflected in the dress code of most international corporations of the 1980s to the early 2000s.   I well remember one of my close friends leaving DHL and going to a rival (UPS). On his very first day at the office he looked very dapper in a brand new sports jacket and slacks. It turned, literally, to tears when he was sent home and told to wear something more appropriate. My own chances of a plum job with this competitor were nil. As, at that time, I wore a beard. [136]

There is much written on personal attire and the importance of dress in fashioning a career, and many traps for the unwary.   I do think that first impressions are very, very important.   I always go way out of my way to make a good first impression although I

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[136] Actually, I tended to wear a beard most of the year but go clean shaven during the summer months. My Managing Director was once able to date an office group photograph fairly accurately based on this observation – much to everyone else's surprise.

am ashamed to admit I have never attempted to elicit feedback. I think the situation with new colleagues, clients etc. is too sensitive at that stage.

I think one of my major goals on first meeting someone is to establish myself as someone that they could do business with in the future. To a certain extent, this means mirroring their positioning as this will make them feel more comfortable and relax. This is much akin to Neuro-linguistic programming although, I am not a practitioner of this particular skill set.

However, I also try to do something different with my second impression. This is to prevent people pigeon holing me and encourage them to "take a second look". This is mainly achieved by the way I dress. I don't want people thinking that I am in this or that particular category and the longer it takes people to get a proper fix on me, the more likely that they will be interested in what I have to say.

5.7 Ethics & Morality in Business

It would be odd in a thesis of this type for me not to opine on issues of business ethics and morality. It is clear that I have made poor moral choices – whether viewed from a consequentialist or deontological (a.k.a. Kantian) perspective. Part of my contribution has been to provide real world philosophical business issues from my own perspective, actions, justification and rationale. Applying the tests (crazy cases) as suggested by Dworkin (2011, p. 283) allows others to assess my conclusions and use these as the basis for the formulation of improved business ethics.

I have already suggested that organisations themselves have no morals. However, blinded by obedience to corporate values and mission many individuals will sacrifice their own principles in favour of organisational goals, possibly to oil their prospects of

promotion.   This I feel, is a major flaw in the Capitalist system.   I have provided illustrations of how I myself, have fallen prey to this tendency and also had it imposed upon me.

I can offer no meta-physical solutions to this phenomenon other than improved ethical education at school and within the family unit.   Perhaps, it is in this territory that religion has the most to contribute…

5.8 Religion

Karl Marx could be said to be the founding father of Critical Theory, and he had no time for religion which he saw as a tool used by Capitalists to drug the masses into accepting their lot. He assumed that it would, in its own time disappear as it served no further useful purpose since dialectical materialism was offered as a replacement.[137] With time for reflection and meditation, it would be unsurprising if Religion did not arise as an issue for contemplation at some stage.   At age 11, I was singing in an English Church choir (and had been for about 2 years) when my Mother casually mentioned to one of the Church stalwarts that I had never been christened!   I was immediately summoned for an emergency baptism together with my younger Sister, which was attended by the Vicar, my Mother and two or three others at most.   My Mother's attitude to religion was pragmatic at best.   She later confided in me that when she was married in Scotland, the affair took on the form of an inter-faith wedding with two separate clergy, one Church of England and one Church of Scotland officiating.

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[137] Dialectic materialism saw only one reality which was independent of our perception, unsurprisingly this view was heavily criticised by Jürgen Habermas.

She had to undergo several weeks on instruction from the former and rapidly came to the conclusion that she believed not the half of it.

Whilst undertaking an Ethics class at the London School of Economics, I was exposed to Eileen Barker's work on the Moonies. (Barker, 1984). At that time the Moonies were reviled as a child stealing and brainwashing cult. But, her research revealed that willing and easily led susceptible young people was actually a more accurate explanation of events.

As a result of this and my own readings of Jean Paul Sartre, in particular "The Roads to Freedom" (1950), I came to the conclusion that God may or may not exist, but I certainly will never find out one way or the other. However, I did still want to be an intrinsically moral person so for that reason, existentialism appealed. I still secretly enjoy giving that as my religion when I am in Malaysia (which I am frequently asked) – mainly as no one can spell it, far less know what it means. I take existentialism to mean taking responsibility for one's own actions similarly to Feldman (2002). Existentialism is also concerned with issues such as the nature of the individual, the central rôle of passions and emotions in human life, the nature of human freedom and the irrational aspects of life (Johnson & Kotarba, 2002) which are all issues that I recount in this thesis.

Existentialism, in some respects, strikes me as very similar to the concept of Moral Epistemology or moral responsibility as advanced by Ronald Dworkin (2011, p. 12) in which each individual is recognised to possess integrity in their opinions as long as they have been responsible in their formation. This position asserts that there is no neutral scientific or metaphysical plane on which we can judge different moral or ethical standpoints. This in turn, is based on Immanuel Kant's view that we cannot respect our own humanity unless we also accept the humanity of others.

As a result of a teaching position at the International Islamic University in Kuala Lumpur and subsequently a Muslim flat mate, I have acquired some knowledge of the tenets of Islam. More specifically, I have developed an interest in the area of Islamic Marketing. Unlike Islamic Finance this is an under-researched topic but as Temporal (2011) has identified this is likely to be a growth area in the 21st Century. The issue of corporate accountability is also relatively new to many companies working under Islamic Social Reporting guidelines (Othman & Md Thani, 2010). From an Islamic perspective, accountability relates to the connections between individuals and firms with God. This is similar to the Islamic concept of *tawid* or unity with God (Maali, Casson, & Napier, 2006)

Islamic business principles are also fraught with additional considerations which a typical Western Marketeer can easily miss. Insurance in Malaysia needs to be *takaful* in order to be acceptable to Muslim customers. Similarly minute quantities of alcohol or even sharing of facilities with bottling plants that bottle alcohol can be sufficient cause to stifle sales (as for example, Coca-Cola and Tabasco sauce in Malaysia). More seriously, the suggestion of porcine DNA in Cadbury's chocolate in 2014 may have longer term sales implications even if suits for damages and blood cleansing are rejected.[138]

In this arena, it is important to take account of the market's concerns and plan for this. My (limited) experience in Malaysia is that this does not form part of the marketing planning process and Halal considerations are merely subsequently retrofitted to the new product some time after launch. I think this is a rich area for further research in which, only a very small proportion of the management research community are either qualified or competent to undertake.

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[138] Both alcohol and pork are considered *haram* in Islam.

I have also had some exposure to both Hinduism, with its pantheon of Gods.   Apart from the confusion (the many Gods also having multiple avatars) it does seem a rather wrathful and fearful religion.   Although it is interesting to note that the Churning of the Sea of Milk by the Gods and Demons which produces the stars and the planets seems to neatly encapsulate the nebular theory of modern astronomy.   The Rig Veda also has the idea of a constantly expanding Universe which equates well to the current Big Bang theory. (Matthiessen, 2003, p. 65).   Hinduism, in many parts of Asia is inextricably linked with Buddhism – which is not so much a religion as a system of belief.

I have not researched Buddhism in any great detail but much of it appears superficially very appealing.   It has the merits of other organised faiths but without so much of the encumbrances and shibboleths.   One variety of Buddhism seems to exhibit certain parallels with Existentialism, in that the solution to man's paradox lies in his own hands.   Constant improvement through the Wheel of Life (or Law) and through the processes of successive re-incarnations is the route to enlightenment.   Much though this line of thinking and certainly method appeals to me, I am left in doubt as to the probability of re-incarnation.   I will, however, read more deeply into Buddhism in the future, that much I do promise myself.

The Buddhist method of mediation is a useful tool in my view and it certainly permits, nay – promotes the practice of reflection.   Indeed, the marriage of experience with science based on Buddhist reflective techniques is proposed by Varela et al to offer a way forward from an overly positivistic perspective (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1993).   So, in summary I would describe myself as an Existentialist with some Buddhist mores.   On reflection, this again may be seen to reflect my tendency towards eclecticism or as I would prefer to describe it – pragmatism.   The requirement to utilise

all relevant sources of knowledge (i.e. a multi-disciplinary approach, (Tetlock, 2006))
is, after all, a characteristic of Critical Theory.

5.9 Death

Whilst working at DHL, we ran a print advertisement about the few certainties in life –
or as we put it – Death, Taxes and DHL.   As I have intimated in an earlier section, I do
really fear the taxman (a.k.a. the US IRS), however, I can say that I do not fear death.

I have two clear episodes where I have confronted death with equanimity and, I can
honestly say that I seemed to observe both with the dispassionate gaze of Camus'
L'Etranger (Camus, 2000).   The first was whilst swimming (some distance) off the
beach in Hammamet in Tunisia in the early 1980s.   The water was calm and flat, the
sun was shining and the beach crowded with sun worshippers.   As I swam, I put some
effort into my strokes (swimming parallel with the shore) but away from children and
others playing water polo and other games.   After a while I tired and decided to swim
back to the beach. I leisurely headed back and was slightly surprised after five or so
minutes to find myself no nearer. I increased my pace but to my horror discovered that
the gap betwixt me and safety was actually increasing; I had been caught in a rip
current. I tried calling for help – but nobody seemed to hear me amongst the frivolities
on the beach. So I vigorously increased my arm and leg thrusts but gained little, I
realised that if I panicked I would die so I decided to opt for a strong steady pace.
After, what seemed an age I reached my depth and gratefully put my feet down onto the
sand. Almost immediately the rip tore my legs from under me as if I was standing in a
river in full spate, and I was swept another 5 or 6 metres further out.   I do remember

thinking – "so this really is it – I am going to die".[139]   Once again I had to swim as strongly as I could (my muscles ached but I could not give up) and again I reached my depth. I swam further in than before to minimise the risk of being swept out again.   I lent forward and dug both feet into the sand and managed to struggle through the surf. I walked the few metres to where my towel lay and collapsed onto the sand unable to speak.   Everything around me was normal and I was asked if I had had a nice swim?

The next morning, we discovered that two people had drowned on that beach that afternoon, caught in that same rip current, an 8 year old girl and a 28 year old man.

The second occasion was in Florida whilst undertaking Flight Training for my Commercial Licence in October 2008. My instructor Eric Bernoulli and I flew north to St Augustine in Florida where we picked up his Girlfriend, 'Chelsea' and headed back to Ormond Beach.   All was fine as the sun started to set.   Chelsea was in a good mood and chatting away, I was flying the plane and Eric was content to sit back and relax.   I prepared the approach plates and made the radio calls to Ormond Beach tower (which, as it was now past hours, was empty, everyone had gone home).   I had a (bad) habit at the time of not making professional check calls.   Eric told me to use the correct terminology, for example, Mixture- Set, Seatbelts-Secure etc. I tended to say things like "Mixture-Good, Seatbelts-OK" etc.

The correct check for the landing gear (i.e. undercarriage) is "Three Greens" (indicating that the nose wheel and two main wheels are deployed correctly for a safe landing.   I lowered the gear and was alarmed to see only two green lights and one red.   I exclaimed "Undercarriage- Not Good" and was rather absentmindedly corrected by Eric.   Who then promptly sat up, looked at the indicator lights and said "that is NOT good".   We exercised the landing gear several times but to no avail, the right hand

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[139] Arthur Dent would have been no less eloquent (Adams, 1979).

main wheel indicator light was showing that it was not fully down.   We tried manually to lower the gear – no luck.   We tried shaking the plane left and right to dislodge the stuck wheel – but again to no avail.

Chelsea had gone very quiet and Eric was clearly concerned for her safety and blaming himself for putting her life in danger (he had had another recent bad experience with a forced landing after an engine failure just weeks previously).   We decided to divert to Daytona International where a Fire and Rescue service was available and declared an "Emergency".   On arriving at the (by now totally dark) airport, we discovered that the Tower had closed the Airport to all other traffic and we had our pick of runway.   We requested a fly by (at low level) of the Tower and a visual check of our landing gear and as we went past, they positioned a spotlight on our undercarriage but were unable to ascertain whether it was down or not.   We were not low on fuel or short of time, so we requested a second fly by and this time the Tower said that the right main seemed to be at least partially down.   This meant that after touchdown the wheel strut was likely to collapse and maintaining directional control would be extremely difficult if not impossible.   Having run out of options, we announced that we would attempt to land.

Eric took control with the objective of landing on one wheel only (the left) and holding the other wheels off the runway as long as possible.   As we passed over the threshold two large fire engines accelerated behind us and followed us down the runway.   I took all of this in, watching with great interest as to how this adventure was developing.   I felt no fear – just fascination as to how the episode was going to unfold.

> I referred to this 'skill' (?) of detachment in Chapter 2. I become
>
> fascinated by the potential outcome of a tricky or dangerous situation to
>
> the extent that I cease to fear the consequences for my own well-being
>
> in a similar manner to that described by Camus (2000)

In the event the landing was uneventful, Eric did indeed land on the main left wheel, but to our relief, the right did not collapse and later we found that the only problem was with a faulty sensor on the right undercarriage. So, I feel I can validly claim that I do not fear death, however, in the manner of dying I would much prefer it to be both quick and painless.

The Samurai are reputed to not fear death and the story is told (Hagakure) of one the Shogun's guards asking the great swordsman and teacher Yaggyū Tajima no kami Munenori to teach him in swordplay. On examining this potential student, the Tajima discovered that the student had made the decision not to fear death at an early age. As a result the teacher declared that he had had many students but none had really deserved the final certificate for swordsmanship, but this one competence (to use Orwellian newspeak) was sufficient to merit it to be awarded to the guardsman (Suzuki, 1973, p. 71).

5.10 Limitations & Recommendations for Further Research.

The limitations of my research are self-evident. I offer little corroboration to my contribution from other parties, this thesis is almost entirely self-reflective. Many academic researchers could quarrel with my philosophical underpinnings and question where is the data that supports my case? This of course begs the question 'what is Knowledge and what is Science'? These are questions which have occupied many minds greater than mine for millennia. I hope that I have amply demonstrated that the answer to both of these questions are still essentially sub-judice. I have made a contribution within an extant paradigm which may or may not be viewed in the future as of consequence.

If I have done one thing, it is to contribute one approach to self-reflection within a corporate environment which I feel has value to management philosophy. As such I think it marks two modest achievements, firstly, a model which other corporate warriors (or wage slaves depending on your perspective) can follow. And secondly, an historical account of my praxis within the habitus (Bourdieu, 1990) of a global marketeer. This latter contribution may (hopefully) provide rich material for future researchers. Maslow (1954) sees self-actualisation as the pinnacle of human motivation. Goffee & Jones (2006) see the leaving of a legacy as pivotal to the architecture of an authentic leader. I would wish my reflexive contribution to be evaluated in this light.

In an earlier section, I described my affiliation with existentialism and the responsibility that each individual bears. Within this context, there is one quotation that I consider most appropriate to my case, once as a marketeer and now, as a teacher: Existentialism understands "how changing teacher education practices require the involvement of the

self, and claims back and values the teacher educator's rôle and identity" (Feldman, 2003).

Future research is thus easy to recommend. More research of this ilk. I do not believe that further research within this paradigm will generate many answers, nor will they provide generalisable theories that can be empirically tested and subsequently applied to other similar situations. However, they may generate further questions which can be empirically tested (if you like using the positivistic paradigm) or more likely spawn further less fuzzy questions in the Socratic tradition which may then lead to advancement of human knowledge. This is similar to what has been termed 'Global Influence' by (McNiff & Whitehead, 2009).

There is also a clear opportunity to apply this to management research, where the Case Study model is endemic. Applying the Roth & Kleiner (1998) assumption that by understanding the motivations, conclusions and mistakes of others in similar situations, learning (and hence presumably, decision making) is improved, this could take the form of action research/learning 'organizational history' studies examining specific issues (Gearty, 2008).

5.11 Final Chapter Summary

Socrates: Yes, my boy, there was a 'correctness of diction'... As for the ending of speeches, everyone seems to be in complete agreement; some call it 'recapitulation' while others call it by other means.

Phaedrus: You mean summarizing the points at the end, and so reminding the audience of what has been said?

Socrates: That's what I mean, and anything else you can add on the subject of speaking scientifically.   (Plato).

This is my recapitulation. It is meant to summarise that which I have learned, what I believe my contribution to human knowledge is and how I perceive my methodology to be in terms of both validity and reliability.   I divide it into the following five sections:

- ◆ Thoughts on Reflection
- ◆ The Development
- ◆ The Description
- ◆ The Explanation
- ◆ The Comments

5.11.1 Thoughts on Reflection

I have described my tendency to retain documents and artefacts far beyond their likely useful lives.   My squirrel-like hoarding has, however, provided me with much physical hard data with which to work.

Likewise, I have described my proclivity for note taking and maintaining a daily diary which provide fertile ground for reflexive activity.   I have had some exposure to Meditation (of which I am still an occasional practitioner) and the discipline of Karate has also served as a frequent reminder of this very useful technique.

For these reasons, I seem to be in that sweet spot where fortune favours my endeavour. To refer back to a previous section on serendipity, this could be described as luck, or more accurately in my view – chance meeting opportunity.   Without my background

and history I would not be the person that I am.   My parents' divorce, my constantly moving definition of "home" has led me to cling to objects (the broken wine goblets), places (Sheffield and Sheffield Wednesday, Scotland etc.), friends (whose friendships I have worked hard to maintain across different time zones and over many years) and my professional career.   Indeed, my own divorce provided a further and unwanted fracture at a time when I was least well equipped to handle it.   But all of these things have combined in an unintentional manner to make me mindful of the past, to be aware of the present and to expect the worst whilst hoping for the best[140].

Unlike Arthur Dent (Adams, 1979) I am, unfortunately, unable to Time Travel. I also have no Crystal ball to enable me to see into the future.   But I have learnt that to be obsessed with either the future, or the past is a mistake.   History teaches us that many mistakes are doomed to be repeated.   The future often turns out to be nowhere near as pleasant as we had hoped for.   The present, as Steven Covey (1989) reminds, us is where we live and that is indeed where we should focus, but with a mindful eye on what we learned from yesterday and how (using Action Research) we plan to subtly change things tomorrow.   Nietzsche (1997, p. 66) would have agreed with this (at least in his later writings) as he saw history of subordinate importance compared to "the purpose of life".

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[140] It's not the despair, Laura. I can take the despair. It's the hope I can't stand. John Cleese.

Figure 5.1   Arthur Dent Reflects

5.11.2 The Development

One question which I have asked myself many times, particularly after reading the literature in the field of Action Learning, is why did I not undertake this task whilst still actively engaged in corporate life?   The reality is that the day to day cut and thrust of managerial decision making coupled with the internal politics, means that there is not the time to do this effectively, see for example Banerjee & Morley (2013, p. 184). Coupled with a wife, two children and an active social life, this becomes even more difficult.

If, however, I had been able to undertake this task some years earlier in my career there would, probably, have been additional payoffs for my work colleagues and organisation (Senge, 1990). Critical reflection has been found by Senge and other authors (Argyris & Schön (1978) and Schön (1983)) to be a crucial factor influencing how an organization learns.

If I have one regret on my methodological development, it would be the absence of like-minded researchers trawling the same depths with whom to share experiences, setbacks and the occasional triumph. I acknowledge freely the positive contribution of my

Supervisors but what would (in my mind indubitably) have added extra quality to both the process and the results would have been other Action Researchers writing within the Living Theory paradigm.   Apart from the clear moral support and psychological benefits, I would have had the benefit of like-minded researchers at earlier or later stages of development who were either struggling with similar issues or had perhaps found elegant solutions.   Once again, I can relate this to my Karate class where both lower coloured belts are able to help me on occasion with Katas I have long since forgotten, as indeed are the more experienced black belts.   This idea has been previously advocated by McNiff & Whitehead (2006) whereby a group of like-minded researchers are able to provide a level of self-supporting validation.   I can see that the Living Theory research methodology in Asia is a very unusual one, hence creating a nexus of researchers interested in this area would be hard.   Intermittent international conferences can only partially fill this gap[141].

5.11.3 The Description

The description of my mission to improve is based on my habitus,[142] which may not prove easily accessible to those readers outwith my own profession.   The concept of Habitus can be directly related to Lewin's field theory (Sundberg, 2001).   However, I have attempted to describe as rich a picture as I am able and endeavoured to explain my thoughts, feelings, actions, rationale, regrets and reflections.   This picture has therefore to be understood in relation to the context (or background) and interpreted within the total gestalt.

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[141] E.g. The Action Research seminar on Action Learning History which I was able to attend in the Summer of 2014 at Ashridge Business School the UK.

[142] Habitus is a sociological term referring to the context of the society under examination.   This will include lifestyle, values and pre-dispositions that are acquired through everyday life (Scott & Marshall, 1998)

The language that I use is that of 21st century corporate newspeak (Orwell, 1949). Within that context, current day practitioners and possibly current day academics may well understand and possibly identify with my description and vignettes. History suggests that my recount may be more opaque to future generations. With this defect comes a benefit. A case study of this kind can never be replicated in the time period in which it is situated. Therefore, it may be usefully studied by future students, academics and practitioners as an exemplar of its time. In this respect therefore my contribution may outlive other more worthy contemporary research on more current pressing management or philosophical issues. Whether it is seen as good research, of course, depends on the reader, be that in 2017 or 2147.

5.11.4 The Explanation

My explanation is riven with bias, misinterpretation and subjectivity. Yet, this is not my Achilles heel. I admit my methodological failings, this is well understood and accepted within the discipline of first person action research (Johnson R. , 1997). I have endeavoured to avoid the pitfalls of envy, greed, narcissism and avarice in the writing of this thesis but I understand that perspective trumps all. However, this too is also a strength. My account is accurate as it may be, triangulated to some extent and honest[143] [144]. An important component of my brand map, is that I perceive myself as honest and this is something on which I do not wish to ever compromise upon.

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[143] I once had great difficulty in a retailers shop in Basingstoke in the 1980s going back with some goods and attempting to explain that they had under-charged me. In the event I gave up, left £5 on the counter and told them to sort it out whatever way they wanted.

[144] Similarly I once reported to Bank Bruxelles Lambert that I had received more money from the ATM than I had requested or indeed was charged for (there was a fold in one of the banknotes). They assured me that this was impossible. On the same day I discovered a female DHL employee had suffered an equivalent loss at the same (in-house) ATM. On this occasion, the solution proved straightforward.

Yet is the explanation of any value? The funding mechanism of the Research Excellence Framework scheduled which was planned to be implemented in the UK in 2014, emphasises not just the academic impact but also the broader social, environmental and economic benefits of research (Hodgkinson & Starkey, 2011). Value of course, depends on to whom the value is meant to pertain. Industry and commerce would claim that if the knowledge is not applicable and of no use, then it is of nugatory value. Academia on the other hand will look for a meaningful contribution to human knowledge, even if that contribution is so esoteric as to be of no value to any man.

So once again, we are confronted with the fundamental question of what is knowledge and who is it for?

For my part I subscribe to the Hodgkinson and Starkey vision, knowledge has to be for the benefit of Society foremost, not the Academy. To be absolutely clear as to my position; Society trumps Academia trumps Commerce. This is consistent with the Aristotle's concept of driving happiness[145] (*eudaimoni*) in the Nicomachean Ethics. This is based on good citizenship contributing to a good state where people are empowered and encouraged to do their best. This of course, adds a political dimension to the thrust of this thesis.

So, let me briefly return to the question of what is knowledge or epistemology. Gibbons (Gibbons, 1998) (Gibbons, et al., 1994) talks of two types of knowledge, Mode 1 and Mode 2. I am not happy with the distinctions as they represent extreme positions which (in my view) bear little relation to reality. Be that as it may, please allow me to expand… Mode 1 concerns traditionally produced knowledge within the Academy

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[145] I have very little understanding of the Greek Language, but it seems to me that Aristotle's definition of 'happiness' is bigger and more encompassing than the English word allows. I sense that he is using the term more as that of completeness, or as some authors have described it – 'as a life well lived'.

which is based on peer reviewed publications, an explanatory paradigm and the development of a little neat theory which may (or may not) have any application in real life. Mode 2 (Von Aken, 2004) (Van Aken, 2005) on the other hand relates to knowledge with the benefit of hindsight (or reflection if you may) in other words knowledge developed in the context of practice. It is a design science focusing on knowledge to solve problems through reflection in practice and knowing how (or in my terminology Tacit Knowledge). I do agree that that Mode 1 knowledge is of great value, likewise Mode 2. I do not subscribe to the view that to be of any value all future advancements in knowledge must meet Mode 2 criteria. But it is indeed, in Mode 2 that this thesis makes its greatest contribution.

5.11.5 The Comments

There are a multiplicity of reasons why my insights may be wrong; Coghlan (2013) lists stupidity, obtuseness, confusion, bias, lack of attention, wrong questions, insufficient questioning, misinterpretation, and psychological blind spots as potential problems. There is no panacea, self-development and critical thinking skills are at a best a flimsy defence.

However, my comments and reflections have added depth to my character and I have realised that I do seem to have a talent for recounting work experiences in my new rôle in a University. Indeed, the opportunity to once again write case studies on some of these experiences provides me with a richer understanding of the forces that were in play. This heightened awareness of the environment has empowered me to identify potential mistakes before I make them and increased my ability to provide wise counsel in the pastoral aspects of my job.

I am also now far more aware of the cultural differences between countries and I have become more tolerant of practices that I do not fully understand. As a result, I have also become less prescriptive in my approach to offering advice and now tend to favour a more Socratic questioning approach.

So, to finish with a summary of the summary; Antonancopoulo (2010) sees the concept of action in action research as referring to phronesis or practical wisdom. By following a systematic approach to my own self-development (Colliver, Goff, Reedy, & Vaartjes, 2015), I believe I have both improved my phronesis/professional practice (which will benefit my future students) and also usefully communicated it in a format which is intelligible to both the business and academic communities.

I have given a number of examples of how individuals attempt to influence others within their organization from a critical theoretic perspective. These behaviours may be driven by fear or anger at a personal level (for example the AA Fort Mcxxx incident, the act of revenge at Wings Holidays or my being perceived as a threat whilst at DHL in Malaysia). In other cases organizational culture can play a significant role as exemplified by the dispute between two people of differing grades in the AA and Francoise's termination in Belgium and yet individual ambitions also play a part. What my research does demonstrate is that organizational behaviour alone does not explain many of the power dynamics within a company and indeed also in its dealings with Customers, Suppliers and other Stakeholders.

Epilogue

"High Flight"

Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of Earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth
of sun-split clouds, — and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of — wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there,
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air....

Up, up the long, delirious, burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace.
Where never lark, or even eagle flew —
And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
- Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.

John Gillespie Magee, Jr. (1922-1941).

On the whole, I am content with the way my life has gone so far. I realise of course that I could have done far better, and hopefully still can. But life is not only about achievement. Happiness is key, work/life balance counts for more in later years than in one's youth –but cannot be left until later years for action.

The acid test would be to ask oneself the question "If I were to die tomorrow, would I be satisfied with the man I have been and what I have done?"

To paraphrase one of my old Dronfield Grammar School reports, my reply would be:

Not bad, but could do better.

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Appendix A   London Business School Shadowing Report

Shadowing Report

Mr. Michael Dent

General Manager Marketing

DHL Express UK

Shadowing Report completed by Giuseppe Auricchio,

MBA 2005, London Business School

Section 1: Introduction

1.A DHL Express, UK

With revenues of nearly €22 billion (2003) DHL is the global leader of the international express/logistics industry, linking 220 countries through 160,000 employees. The company maintains 5,000 offices worldwide, amongst which regional and country management centres. The UK is a key European market both for commerce to/from the British Isles as well as for its role in facilitating European traffic to North America. Consequently, DHL UK has been a critical driver of growth for the company in Europe.

DHL is 100% owned by Deutsche Post, which acquired the company in December of 2002. The effects of the merger are still evident in two ways. First, in the stark cultural contrast between DHL's entrepreneurial spirit and the procedural strictness typical of the once government-owned German postal giant. Second, in the ongoing efforts to integrate Deutsche Post's express delivery/logistics units globally, which have caused strain on DHL's resources particularly at the country-management level.

1.B Michael Dent, General Manager Marketing, DHL UK

Michael has spent all of his working career within the service sector, primarily the travel and distribution industries[146]. Michael trained as a systems analyst, holds a research degree in economics (MPhil) and an MBA. Michael joined DHL UK in 1989 as Pricing & Planning Manager and has since held posts in London, Brussels and Fort Lauderdale. All of Michael's roles have benefitefrom his strong team-building skills as well as an understanding of multiple functions, gained through prior experiences in systems, finance, planning, sales and operations.

Michael describes himself as being rich in 'strategic marketing expertise, international project management know-how and communication skills.' Born in Scotland, Michael is 52 years old and has two children. In his spare time he enjoys cycling, hill walking, travel and flying.

1.C The Theoretical Backdrop

The origins of the Shadowing Assignment can be found in the century old quest to understand the activities at the basis of 'good management'. For the greater portion of the

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[146] Please see Appendix 5 for an extract from Michael's CV.

20th century management was defined by the normative functions of planning, coordinating, controlling and organizing[147]; the belief that managers, to be effective, needed to devote their efforts to one of these four activities was widespread amongst academic circles. Between 1975 and 1988 three new pieces of research emerged to challenge the classical view. First Henry Mintzberg (1975) and later John Kotter (1982) and Fred Luthans (1988) conducted observation studies to empirically determine, in behavioural terms, what activities managers actually performed. The results of their work dispelled the most commonly held myths about managerial behaviour.

Mintzberg[148] identified ten roles that managers tend to enact, which he categorized as either interpersonal, informational or decisional[149]. He rejected the portrayal of the manager as a 'reflective, systematic planner… performing a number of regular duties', and concluded that a disjointed series of tasks was more typical of a manger's day. Kotter[150] found that the challenges faced by managers consisted mainly in dealing with an 'enormous amount of information' and 'getting things done through a large group of people'.

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[147] This classical view of management was first defined by the French administrator and writer Henri Fayol in 1948.

[148] Mintzberg's findings are summarized in the article 'The Manager's Job: Folklore and Fact'.

[149] Mintzberg formulated three interpersonal roles (figurehead, leader and liaison), three informational roles (monitor, disseminator and spokesman) and four decision-making roles (entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator and negotiator).

[150] 'What Effective General Managers Really Do', 1982.

To overcome these obstacles, managers 'rely on agenda setting and network building'. Luthans[151] focused on contrasting the functions characterizing *successful* managers with those of *effective* ones. He identified two activities as being related specifically to successful managers, namely interaction with outsiders and socializing; effective managers, on the other hand, are more concerned with human resource management.

The analysis that follows, based on data collected shadowing Michael Dent, uses the aforementioned studies as a basis to reflect on the nature of managerial work.

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[151] 'Successful vs. Effective Managers', 1988; 'What do Successful Managers Really Do? An Observation Study of Managerial Activities', 1985.

Section 2: Results of Observation

2.A   Methodology

I observed Michael over the course of three days during the week of August 31st, 2004. Data was collected both at his office as well as while attending external meetings. I also interviewed members of Michael's team, probing them on themes discussed with Michael and of concern to him.

The period of observation was somewhat atypical given its collocation immediately following the summer break. Indeed Michael's immediate superior, John Geddes, was not in the office during the interval I spent with him. However, Michael thoroughly explained to me the way in which the absence of his boss impacted what would have been the typical flow of his workday. Despite John's absence possibly effecting the veracity of my observations, the lessened pressure faced by Michael allowed him ample time to guide me through each of the tasks he performed. I thus feel my study benefits from Michael's clear summaries and the subsequent good relationship we built.

Michael's activities were recorded as he performed them; notes were made on the structure and culture of both the organization and that of his own team. The data was catalogued using the *Leadership Observation Template*[152]; each of the tasks observed was classified under one of the 8 suggested categories[153] of managerial activities[154].

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[152] Luthans & Lockwood, 1984.

[153] Please see Appendix 1 for detail of the LOS categories of Managerial Activities.

[154] The ninth category, disciplining/punishing, was not used because of its infrequent occurrence; this is suggested in Luthan's own research and was found to be applicable to Michael's behaviour as well.

Activities including a variety of tasks (such as project meetings) were allocated to more than one category.

2.B   Summary of Observations

Michael performed a total of 61 tasks over 1,100 minutes, yielding an average of 18 minutes per task. The graph below depicts the share of time devoted by Michael to each of the 4 types of activities into which the LOS categories are grouped[155].

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[155] Please see Appendix 2 for full detail concerning the aggregation of LOS descriptive tasks into one of four groups, i.e. networking, traditional management, communication and HR management.

**Amount of Observed Behavior by Category (% of Total Time)**
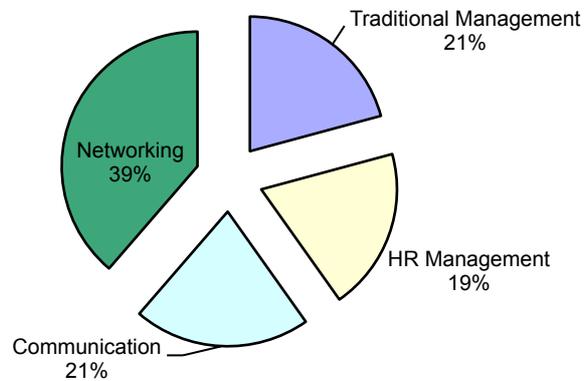
The above analysis highlights Michael's effectiveness at balancing all four aspects of his role as a manager. A significant portion of his time is dedicated to *Networking* (39%), which with *Communication* (21%) accounts for over 60% of all his activity. *HR Management* also figures prominently; the reason is to be found in the current state of Michael's department, which as of late has suffered numerous departures[156]. Hence, at present Michael's division is understaffed, a condition that requires him to dedicate considerable time to recruitment activities.

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[156] Please see Appendix 4 for an organizational chart; note that the information concerning Michael's division is outdated due to recent personnel changes, with many posts yet to be filled.

A more detailed breakdown of the activities performed and the time dedicated to each is provided in the graph below.

Amount of Observed Behavior by Activity Type (Minutes)
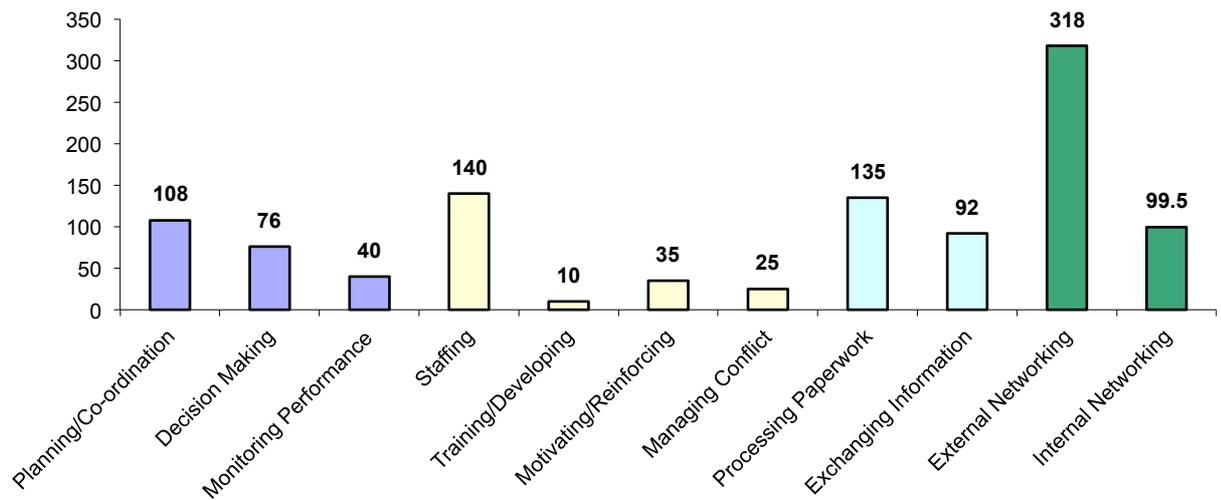
External Networking emerges as the activity to which Michael devotes the greatest amount of his day; during our time together Michael attended a presentation hosted by a media agency and dedicated an afternoon to a non work-related activity[157]. Michael conceded that the time he allocates to external networking varies greatly on a week-by-week basis; nevertheless, he does actively seek opportunities to involve himself with clients/suppliers and more generally in the business community. *Staffing* received considerable attention, for the reasons previously mentioned. *Planning/Coordination*,

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[157] Michael had been selected as juror to participate in the election of the UK's 'Superbrand 2004': for the purpose of this exercise, the activity has been classified as 'community service'.

Processing Paperwork and *Exchanging Information*, as expected, weigh considerably in the day of a managers such as Michael who are responsible large teams.

Michael also pays a great deal of attention to *Internal Networking*. I observed a number of informal ways in which Michael satisfied his almost obsessive desire to 'find out what is going on in the business'. Rather than send an email or make a call, he often preferred walking across the office 'for the sake of bumping into someone', going as far as altering the path taken to and from the individual's desk; more than once, he returned to his desk with an unexpected piece of information picked up along the way. Twice daily, he visited the upper management floor conscientiously choosing specific times so as to increase the likelihood of exposure to his superiors[158]. He spoke to me of the need to use project meetings as a 'discovery process', leveraging the contacts of his counterparty as a source of valuable information. And at least once weekly Michael made it a point of having lunch with a colleague with whom he had never socialized before.

Below, the activities performed by Michael have been grouped first in accordance with their scheduling and then with respect to their involvement of third parties.

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[158] Michael confessed that he believed the one hour period following lunch to be the one in which the greatest number of directors could be found at their respective desks.

Activity Planning: Scheduled vs. Spontaneous Tasks
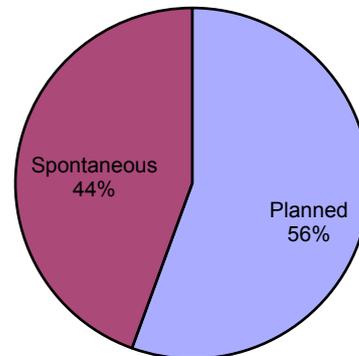
Activity Sharing (% of Total Time)
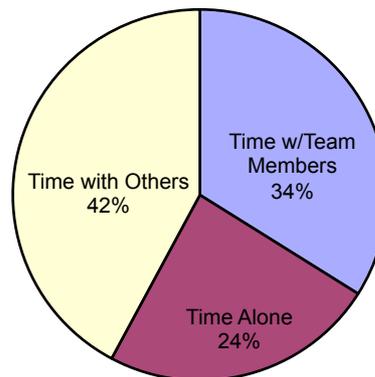
Despite Michael performing a majority of planned tasks, the significant share held by spontaneous activities suggests that his agenda is in no way confined by the rigid barriers of a pre-determined routine. Indeed, the presence of his boss would generally

add an even greater amount of unpredictability to his day[159]. As expected, a large portion of Michael's day is shared with others; time alone is spent primarily attending to desk work and preparing for meetings. Of note is the share of activities in which people outside Michael's own team are involved, a further testament to his exceptional networking abilities.

A final analysis was performed to highlight similarities in the distribution of Michael's activities between days. Although commonalities in the types of tasks performed were evident, their distribution throughout the day varied greatly and no clear patter emerged. The only trend found consisted in the time of the day Michael dedicated to processing paperwork[160].

2.C   Data Analysis & Conclusions

The complex organizational structure which characterizes DHL imposes on Michael demands from more than one source. Within the UK, Michael reports to the Commercial Department's head, John Geddes, who in turn acts on behalf of the company's country manager. Michael must also coordinate his activities with those of peer Marketing

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[159] Michael estimated that at least one hour of each workday was devoted to impromptu discussion with John Geddes. Often, such discussions would lead to unplanned activities which would significantly impact the flow of his activities.

[160] Checking only for urgent mails and leaving the remainder to be answered at the end of the day, Michael more effectively took advantage of the time when 'everyone else was in the office', during which he devoted most of his resources to personal interaction with other team members.

Managers, both across Europe and worldwide, with whom he interacts through the mediation of the DHL Global Coordination Centre. Hence, Michael's agenda is crowded with requests made both by local and international parties; furthermore, tasks span across a number of distinct functions, including finance, sales and HR, a condition which typifies most marketing departments. Facing a dilemma very similar to that outlined by Kotter[161], the evidence suggests that Michael recognizes the importance of network building an effective tool for tackling such a challenge. My observation of his behaviour also revealed Michael's tendency to spend considerable time in developing his agenda. Indeed, for each of the people with whom he was likely to come into contact with, Michael identified 3 to 4 specific items of discussion[162] in preparation for the next potential 'corridor chat'. He aggressively but tactfully sought out information, constantly looking for 'allies' to help accomplish his objectives but always aware of the need to 'give in order to receive in return'.

As a manager, Michael's activities require him to be sensitive to the needs of both his superiors as well as those who depend on him. As a result, Michael often plays different roles throughout the day. With respect to external counterparties, Michael takes on

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[161] Kotter defines one of two fundamental challenges found in most manager's jobs as 'getting things done through a large and diverse group of people despite having little direct control over most of them'.

[162] In addition to 3-4 work related agenda items, Michael cultivated one topic of social interest with each of his counterparties, which he used as a means of 'rapport building'.

decisional roles. Due to the multiple demands being posed on his resource-thin department, many moments saw Michael acting as a negotiator and resource allocator. Within his own team, Michael takes on interpersonal and informational roles: his direct reports look to him for leadership, my introduction to the department saw him take on the role of figurehead and by virtue of his contact with other parts of the organization Michael disseminates information to the rest of his team. Despite these many different roles, no evidence suggested that Michael changed his style of behaviour in accordance with the task or type of interaction he was engaged in. His manner is consistently calm and conciliatory yet firm, which in great deal explains the almost seductive power he yields over his counterparties.

With regards to his allocation of time, Michael is at present faced with severe staff shortages which require him to devote significant resources to HR concerns. As the vacant posts are filled, it is likely that the weight of this activity on his day will diminish. However, it will remain of critical importance. Indeed, Michael confessed to me that 'building the team like it was a few years ago', with the competencies and ambition necessary to be one of the best in its field worldwide, is his greatest ambition.

Section 3: General Lessons

3.A   Comparison to Expectations

The behaviour I observed during the Shadowing Assignment both reinforced some of my expectations about general management as well as differed from others.

I was particularly surprised to find that a rather limited amount of time is devoted specifically to decision making. Indeed, rarely if ever did Michael take time out to resolve strategic issues. Rather, in agreement with Mintberg's findings, he showed a strong predisposition 'towards action and a dislike for reflective activities'. The activities that characterized Michael's day were not on average as brief as those observed by Mintzberg but their flow was relentless and often unexpected. Thus Michael was often forced to think on his feet and respond to demands as they were made, the reason for which decision making is a 'continuous' process for him.

I had expected to observe a considerable amount of information exchange, negotiation and paperwork processing amongst Michael's activities; indeed, this turned out to be the case. Mintzberg dismissed the analogy of the effective manager seen as a good conductor, sitting back after he has orchestrated everything; in the real world, managerial work is not confined only to the more noble tasks of time planning and delegating. The effective manager has to perform regular duties as well, as did Michael.

Both Kotter and Luthans highlight the importance of interaction and networking as keys to achieving managerial success. While the need to do so with respect to one's own workgroupappears obvious to most, what surprised me was Michael's drive to continuously seek out opportunities to expand his network beyond his immediate confines. Indeed, I was not expecting to observe a day-to-day behaviour in which active network building (both within the organization and externally) is viewed as a priority. It was clear even from my limited time with him that Michael benefited greatly from the ability to call on an expansive network of relationships in implementing his agenda.

Michael's role as a monitor and enforcer was more limited than I thought it would have been. In accordance with Luthan's findings, he spent relatively little time intentionally motivating team members but rather did so through his openness and generally upbeat demeanour. He also reinforced his intentions in more subtle manner than what I had anticipated. I expected Michael's guidance to come from planned meetings in which he would look to direct the behaviour of his team. Rather, as Kotter rightfully observes,

'instead of telling people what to do, GM's ask'. Michael's inquisitive nature not only assist him in collecting useful information; it is also a way in which he advances his agenda by influencing the behaviour of those around him.

Some of the more practical considerations concerning certain aspects of a manager's job appeared obvious to me from the start, perhaps given my own past experience in the field. The prevalence of verbal communication over documents [163], the considerable amount of time spent with others and the wide breadth of topics typical of a GM's conversation (including non work-related themes) were all apparent in Michael's behaviour and would seem to me as patterns to be expected in most manager's day.

3.B   Conclusions

My observations enforced my own belief in the importance of relationship building; however, pursuing this objective at all times is challenging and requires a long-term perspective. I was aware of the essential need to gather information through targeted and sensible questions. Yet, the Shadowing experience persuaded me of the potential that lies in using such moments as both a means to fulfil one's 'data needs' as well as an alternative.

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[163] The idea that 'the senior manager needs aggregated information, which a formal management information system best provides' is yet another of the 'myths' surrounding managerial behaviour that Mintzberg dismisses, arguing that managers strongly favour verbal media, telephone calls and meetings, over documents'.

to giving orders. Finally, I was not surprised by the multitude of roles played by Michael; what impressed me was his ability to maintain consistency in his behaviour independently of the task being performed or the person he faced. His approachable style, colloquial nature and ability to listen were a distinguishing feature in all his engagements and one I feel made a positive impact on his effectiveness.

Section 4: Being a Leader

The logistics industry is dominated by three global players (DHL, FedEx and UPS). Fierce competition has caused a gradual increase in client's expectations. Marketing within this industry is therefore a vital function; given that what is being sold is a service, it is up to the marketing department to kick-off the development a trustworthy relationship with the consumer. Yet, the recent reduction in margins has sparked a cost cutting frenzy which has reduced the availability of funds. Thus, marketers are required to make do with limited resources. As verified through my own observations, success in this environment is crucially dependent on a manager's ability to create fruitful networks through which to advance his/her agenda. Equally important are key decisional roles, particularly those of negotiator and resource allocator. Indeed, were I to hold Michael's job I would be very concerned with clearly defining the responsibilities of my department and communicating goals and objectives to upper management. Given that marketing is interlinked with a number of different functions within the organization, there is a tangible

risk that energies are dispersed attending to demands that do not directly pertain to the department's scope.

One of the most difficult aspects of Michael's job consisted in dealing with the many defections experienced over the past year. For no fault of his own, Michael witnessed personnel losses which during the time of my visit were causing him significant personal and professional strain. Michael chose not to disguise his department's difficulties, neither to his own team nor to his superiors. Rather, as argued by Goffee, by 'exposing his vulnerability' he was able to win the support and understanding of those around him, who appreciated his efforts aimed at rapidly resolving the situation. My observations convinced me that revealing one's weaknesses can be a powerful tool to build solidarity when used wisely.

During my time with him, Michael did not shy away from revealing his uniqueness to those around him. He expressed his differences by, amongst other things, openly discussing his personal interests and hobbies with colleagues and by daring to challenge them in debates on controversial issues. This I feel contributed tremendously to the confidence he inspired in his co-workers. Capitalizing on what makes you different, rather than hiding it and conforming to a norm, is 'a fundamental quality of leaders'[164]. It is,

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[164] 'Why Should Anyone be Led by You?, Robert Goffee.

however, important to take into account the environment in which one operates. In Michael's case, the liberal spirit typical of DHL allowed him liberties perhaps greater than those he would have been awarded elsewhere. Nevertheless, I fell that one can always adapt his/her behaviour and find an appropriate way to communicate uniqueness, perhaps in some places in a less provocative manner than in others.

Managing stakeholders is a challenging task. The classic definition of stakeholders is one which includes clients, colleagues and company shareholders. Yet, what I appreciated in Michael is the inclusion of an additional party that is sometimes ignored: himself. Michael is a driven manager who dedicates himself whole heartedly to his job; yet, he understands the importance of looking after 'life outside work' and managing himself as an individual. His satisfaction in other realms of life provides him with the energy, passion and serenity necessary to perform exceptionally while at work. He actively seeks activities that engage him in the community, which provides him with stimuli different to those which he experiences daily at DHL. He continues to participate in several development programs, most recently travelling to Costa Rica for a full-emersion Spanish language course. He has reached a maturity in his career and is content with his job; yet, this does not stop him from constantly looking for 'the second half' of his life, a new role through which to reinvent himself all over again. I hope to make treasure of his example.

Word Count: 3217 (Excluding Table of Contents, Charts, Appendix and Footnotes)

Appendix 1. The LOS Categories of Managerial and Behavioral Descriptors

Planning/coordinating

1. Setting goals & objectives

2. Defining tasks needed to accomplish goals

3. Scheduling employees, timetables

4. Assigning tasks and providing routine instructions

5. Coordinating activities of different substitutes to keep work running smoothly

6. Organizing the work load

Staffing

1. Developing job descriptions for position openings

2. Reviewing applications

3. Interviewing applicants

4. Hiring

5. Contacting applicants to inform them as to whether or not they have been hired

6. "Filling in" when needed

Training/developing

1. "Orienting" employees, arranging for training seminars and the likes

2. Clarifying roles, duties and job descriptions

3. Coaching, acting as a mentor, walking subordinates through tasks

4. Helping subordinates with personal development plans

Decision making/problem solving

1. Defining problems
2. Choosing between two or more alternatives or strategies
3. Handling day-to-day operational crises as they arise
4. Weighing trade-offs, making cost-benefit analysis
5. Deciding what to do
6. Developing new procedures to increase efficiency

Processing paperwork

1. Processing mail
2. Reading reports, emptying the in-box
3. Writing reports, memos, letters, etc.
4. Routine financial reporting and bookkeeping
5. General desk work

Exchanging routine information

1. Answering routine procedural questions
2. Receiving and disseminating requested information
3. Conveying the results of meetings
4. Giving or receiving routine information over the phone
5. Attending staff meetings of an informational nature

Monitoring/controlling performance

1. Inspecting work
2. Walking around and checking things out, touring
3. Monitoring performance data (ex. company printouts, production, financial reports)
4. Preventive maintenance

Motivating/reinforcing

1. Allocating formal organizational rewards
2. Asking for input, participation
3. Giving credit when due, conveying appreciation, compliments
4. Listening to suggestions
5. Giving feedback on positive performance
6. Sticking up for group to supervisors and others, backing a subordinate
7. Delegating responsibility and authority

Managing conflict

1. Managing interpersonal conflicts between subordinates and other
2. trying to get cooperation or consensus between conflicting parties
3. Attempting to resolve conflicts

Interacting with others

1. Public relations
2. Contacting customers, suppliers, vendors
3. External meetings
4. Community service activities

Socializing/politicking

1. Non work-related chit-chat
2. Informal joking around
3. Discussing rumours, hearsay, grapevine

Appendix 2. The activities of Real Managers

Each of the 11 activities[165] that comprise the Leader Observation System can in turn be categorized into 4 activities that define what real managers do, in accordance with research carried out by Fred Luthans.

Descriptive Category from LOS Log	Real Managers' Activities
Planning/Co-ordination Decision Making Monitoring Performance	Traditional Management
Staffing Training/Developing Motivating/Reinforcing Managing Conflict	HR Management
Processing Paperwork Exchanging Information	Communication
External Networking Internal Networking	Networking

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[165] 'Disciplining/punishing is not included due to its infrequent occurrence.

Appendix 3.   A 'typical day for Michael'

9:00-9:15   Michael has a corridor conversation with Aaron Winter, Head of Service Drop Point Project, with whom he discusses concerns relating to the involvement of his department in Aaron's work.

9:15-9:35   the day begins with an informal staff meeting with Donna, the department's Secretary. Several issues of administrative nature are addressed , including staffing, scheduling of employees and budgeting concerns.

9:35-9:45   Michael has a morning chat with a number of his team members, who mix in both work-related questions for him to provide input on as well as chit-chat about their week.

9:45-9:50   Michael calls the IT department to discuss a nagging issue related to his PC. It is the second time he has done so in the past week but the problem has yet to be resolved.

9:50-10:00   While checking his emails, Michael finds that he has not yet received confirmation for an external agency meeting scheduled for that afternoon and thus assumes it to be cancelled

10:00-11:30   Michael attends a meeting with the Head of Commercial/IT Systems, Gee Udobang; his objective is that of raising his own department's profile with Gee so as to move up on his priority list. The meeting is scheduled to last for 1 hour, but Michael fears that it will extend further because Gee 'loves talking'. It goes on for roughly 90 minutes during which a number of issues are discussed with no clear structure.

11:30-11:35   Following the ends of the meeting, Michael chats with Mark Gilliland to inform him of the outcome.

11:35-11:45   Michael checks his emails; a mix of personal and work-related notes fills his inbox. Most of his time is taken up by a request for a reference, which he receives from a recently departed employee.

11:45-12:00   Michael stops in to visit Mark Peacock, who has returned to the office following a day spent on the field in a sales meeting. He chats with him for a few minutes, answering questions and checking up on his plans for the week.

12:00-12:10   Upon returning to his office own , Michael receives a visit from a staff member who poses a number of brief work-related questions on which she looks for Michael's guidance.

12:15-12:45   Lunch

13:00-13:15   On his way back from lunch, Michael walks through the upper management floor. It is the time he prefers for doing so because that in which he is most likely to 'catch someone'. He is unlucky this time but takes advantage of the opportunity to chat with Donna, Simon's secretary ('his boss's boss', as he refers to him).

13:15-13:20   Michael checks his email, on the look-out primarily for urgent items. There are none, so he leaves the task of answering the messages until later in the day.

13:20-13:40   An impromptu meeting with Nina Muir, one of 5 Product Managers. He relays to her information received via email and discusses with her possible solutions to the problem posed.

13:40-13:45   Michael receives a call-back from Sharon, with whom he discusses issues related to the management of the division's Internet/Intranet portal; the task has been jeopardized by the departure of the staff member previously responsible for it and is likely to imply an increase to the workload of his team.

13:45-14:00   Michael speaks to the department's Secretary, Nina, with regards to the need to update the internal brochure. He sets a date with her for the completion of the task and chats about its layout.

14:00-16:00   Michael dedicates a significant portion of the afternoon to an external exercise (i.e. the voting of the UK's "Superbrand", for which he was selected as juror); he does so on a charitable basis.

16:00-17:00   Before heading home, Michael replies to his emails. Some require his own input, while others Michael simply forwards on to relevant staff members.

Appendix 4. DHL UK, Organizational Chart

A) The Commercial Department, headed by John Geddes and comprising the

Marketing Division.

The Commercial Structure
January 2004
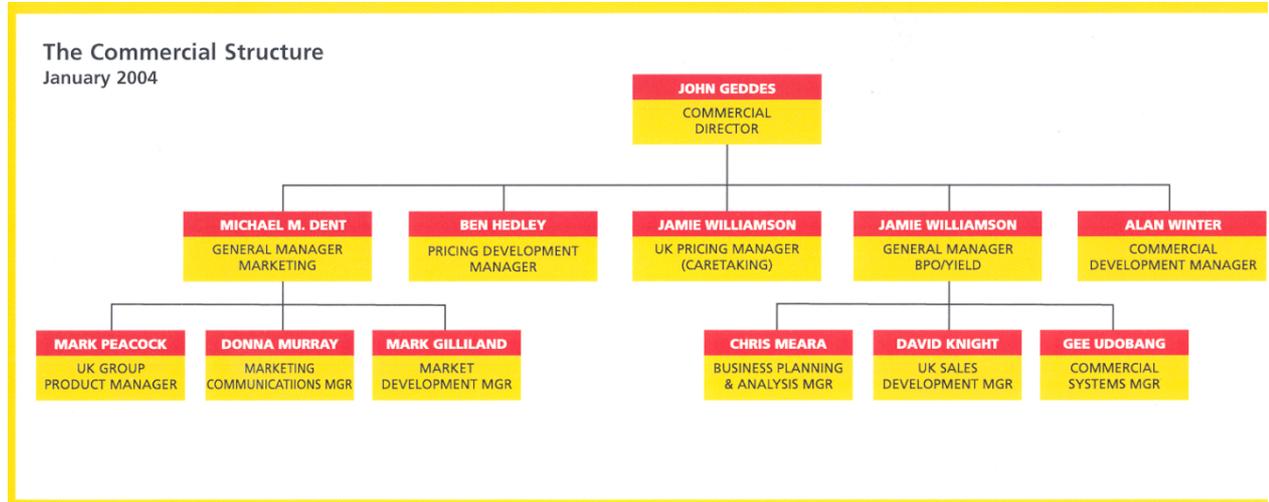
B) The Marketing Division, headed by Michael Dent.
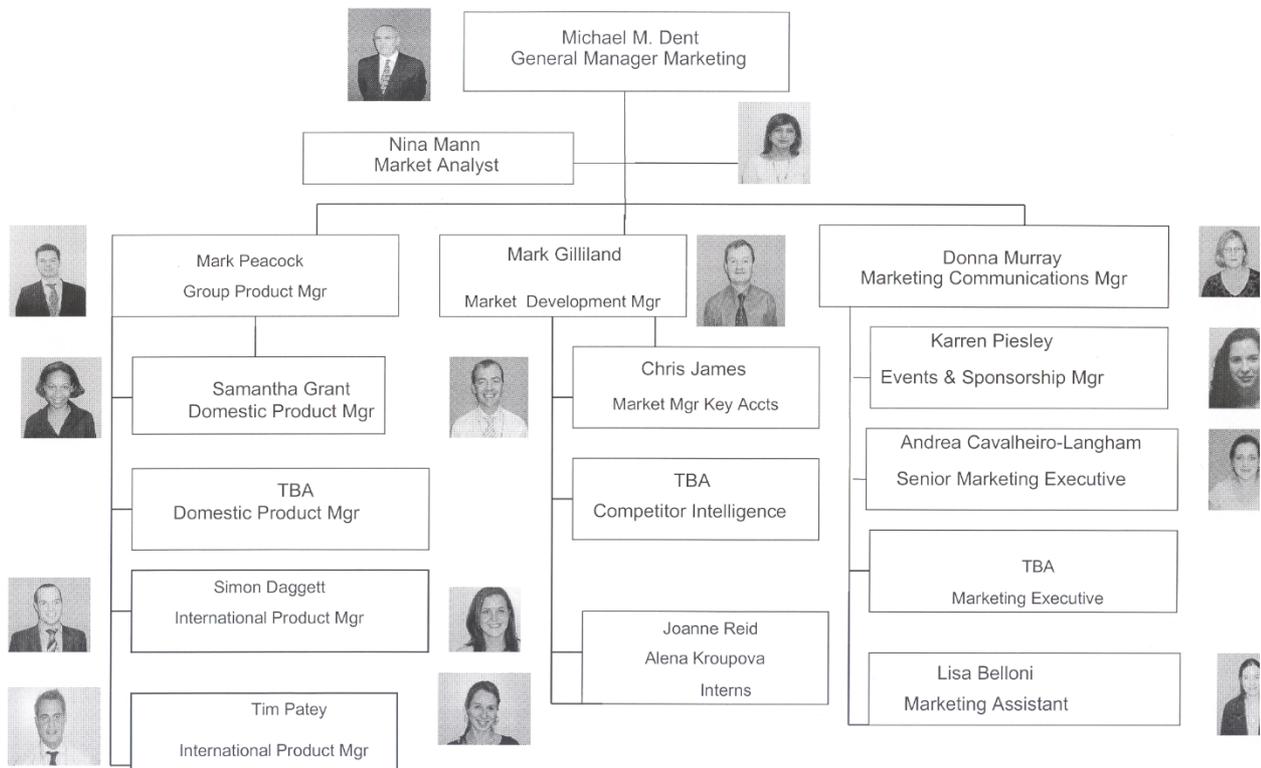
Appendix B The DHL/Airborne Express Acquisition.

National Management University of Singapore/HELP University Case Studies

THE DHL ACQUISITION OF

AIRBORNE EXPRESS

Michael M Dent

Brett Ryder

michaelmd@help.edu.my

The German Post Office buys a US Airline

August 14, 2003 – The shareholders of Airborne, a privately owned US airline, approved the acquisition of their company by DHL.   DHL was 100% owned by Deutsche Post World Net (the German Post Office).   The acquisition became effective the next day.   The DHL Management team based in San Francisco had to make some fast and major decisions on how the integration of Airborne should be handled.   The major issues primarily related to the urgent cost savings required (due to the ever worsening financial results of DHL US).   These were to be achieved by eliminating duplicated labour, concentrating Operations into only one of the two extant Hubs (and hence deciding which airline network and aircraft fleet would be adopted) and rationalising both the Airline fleet, ground vehicles and Service Centres to take out unnecessary capacity.

ABX or Airborne Express was the 3rd largest parcel carrier in the United States after FedEx and UPS.   They operated their own fleet of converted passenger aircraft with specially designed narrow containers which were able to fit into the smaller doors on non-cargo specific aircraft.   Airborne operated its own Service Centres, Aircraft and Drivers (or Couriers as they were known in DHL).   It also operated its own Hub[166] in Wilmington, Ohio.

The main DHL functional areas involved were HR, Operations and Marketing, but the task masters were clearly Finance and the Deutsche Post Board in Germany.

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[166] A point to point airline network focuses on City pairs, whereas a Hub & Spoke network channels the major volumes through the largest airports and uses feeder services to the outlying urban locations.

Company Background

DHL is a wholly owned subsidiary of Deutsche Post (DP), operating in the Mail, Express, Freight, Logistics, Warehousing & Distribution markets. DHL Express is the division which concentrates on Air & Road Express in some 220 countries and territories. The company was founded in 1969 by Dalsey, Hilblom & Lynn (hence DHL) in the United States but for various reasons was never able to make a major impact on that market. Instead growth came from partners (also operating under the DHL banner) in Hong Kong and the United Kingdom.

When DHL was bought by Deutsche Post in 1997 the Germans set about buying up any company which they felt could add to their portfolio offering. The big gap as far as DHL Express was concerned was still the United States. A number of different strategies were tested in this market – all of which failed. As a result the previous CEO had had to resign. The conclusion was that until enough scale was built costs would be too high to seriously compete with the two main incumbents; FedEx & UPS.

DHL US was bleeding money and urgent action was required to staunch the flow, establish some economies of scale and rationalise the two operations down into one. Money was set aside for a large scale re-launch of the new company once all the pieces of the jigsaw were in place.

Market Context

In 2002 Deutsche Post had made a bid for Airborne Express the 3rd largest operator in the market because of its strong position in the US market and the fact that they had a fully operational airline.   The economics of the Express industry are such that there are huge system costs and higher volumes are essential just to cover these.   Organic growth was felt to be too slow.   Initially there was a huge barrier to overcome – namely foreign ownership of a US airline, but despite much political lobbying from the two major (US based) competitors FedEx and UPS and the deal was completed in mid 2003.   Now plans had to be rapidly made to incorporate the new acquisition into DP WorldNet.

Major Issues

The DHL aircraft fleet was made up of cargo specific aircraft that flew into the United States from South & Central America, Europe and Asia.   The Airborne fleet was far more focused on intra-US air movements. Airborne's intercontinental shipments were typically moved on commercially available "linehaul" (i.e. scheduled passenger aircraft where air freight was carried in the belly of the aeroplane underneath the passenger deck).   DHL's Hub was in Cincinnati whilst Airborne's was in Ohio.   Significant

economies of scale could be achieved if all the shipments from both companies could be handled by a single Hub.

Both companies operated a Hub & Spoke aircraft network rather than a point to point network.   This meant that every night shipments would be flown from various locations to the Hub, sorted and then put back onto another aeroplane for delivery to the outbound Service Centre/Station.   In both cases some 60 aircraft would arrive between 20:00 in the evening and depart 02:00 in the morning.   This very complex and time critical operation could be adversely affected by weather and if material missed the outbound connection it could result in logjams and serious delays for several days.

Major savings could be made by cutting out duplication in the workforce, the Airborne drivers were unionised and considered potentially quite militant, DHL's Couriers by comparison were smaller in number and less well organised.   There were four major groups of employees in both companies, the first were the Couriers/Drivers who were based at the various Service Centres or Stations all over the United States.   Both companies also employed various regional sales teams who were located at the Service Centres (Stations) Further duplication existed in the Hub/Sort Centre staff located at the main Hub (Airport) and the head office staff (including Customer Services & Finance) of Airborne & DHL.

Choosing the Least Worst Options

Selecting which staff to retain and which to let go was clearly going to be a tricky decision, the ideal in theory was to choose the best staff from both companies, alternatively DHL could try to primarily retain existing staff.   On the other hand the Airborne staff were far larger in number and would be familiar with both the Hub and Aircraft equipment processes and procedures if Wilmington was chosen.   So perhaps the decision on which Hub was to be used was the first and most pressing issue.

DHL was a major employer at Cincinnati but it was clear that very few personnel would consider moving to Wilmington and similarly few Airborne personnel would move to Kentucky. Whichever Hub was chosen would result in the loss of key experienced staff.

The operational switch to one Hub could not easily be accomplished in a Phased manner so it seemed that a Big Bang approach was the easiest to master. This would require moving all flights flying into one hub into the other on one specific night.

The Deutsche Post board in Bonn were keen to see the fruits of their investment pay off as soon as possible, DHL losses in the United States were a now regular embarrassment at the Annual General Meeting and the new TV advertising campaign was ready to roll.

All that was needed was for a few operational decisions to be quickly made and then the Green light could be switched on.

Teaching Note

Can be taught at Undergraduate or Postgraduate levels. Issues include HR/ethical problems, operational decision making under financial pressures and the inter-relatedness of decisions made in one functional area and their impact on other functions. It may be advantageous to split the class into 3 groups, one taking on the rôle of the Operations Director, one the rôle of the HR Director and one taking on the rôle of the Sales & Marketing Director

The three TV Commercials run by DHL just prior to the opening of the Wilmington Hub are available on the following You Tube videos.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldK22KlhOz4&list=PL0B34EAA16B5FE50F&index=5&feature=plpp_video

Synopsis

DHL is a wholly owned subsidiary of Deutsche Post (DP) the German Post Office operating in the Mail, Express, Freight, Logistics, Warehousing & Distribution markets. DHL Express is the division which concentrates on Air & Road Express in some 180 countries and territories. The company was founded in 1969 by Dalsey, Hilblom & Lynn (hence DHL) in the United States but for various reasons was never able to make a major impact on that market. Instead growth came from partners (also operating under the DHL banner) in Hong Kong and the United Kingdom.

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In 2002 Deutsche Post made a bid for Airborne Express the 3rd largest operator in the market. Initially there was a huge barrier to overcome – namely foreign ownership of a US airline, but despite much lobbying from the two major (US based) competitors FedEx and UPS approval was eventually granted. Now plans had to be rapidly made to incorporate the new acquisition into DP WorldNet.

Airborne operated its own Service Centres, Aircraft and Drivers (or Couriers as they were known in DHL). It also operated its own Hub in Wilmington Ohio.

DHL US was bleeding money and urgent action was required to staunch the flow, establish some economies of scale and rationalise the two operations down into one. Money was set aside for a large scale re-launch of the new company once all the pieces of the jigsaw were in place.

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Epilogue

November 10, 2008 - DHL announced that it was cutting 9,500 jobs as it discontinued air and ground operations within the United States. DHL said that it would continue to operate between the United States and other nations. But they would be dropping "domestic-only" air and ground services within the US by Jan. 30 "to minimize future uncertainties." DHL's 9,500 job cuts are on top of 5,400 job reductions announced earlier this year. After these job losses, between 3,000 to 4,000 employees will remain at DHL's U.S. operations, it was also shutting down all ground hubs and reducing its number of stations to 103 from 412.

The CEO who had overseen this acquisition had been asked to leave some time earlier.

Appendix C   Exemplars of data
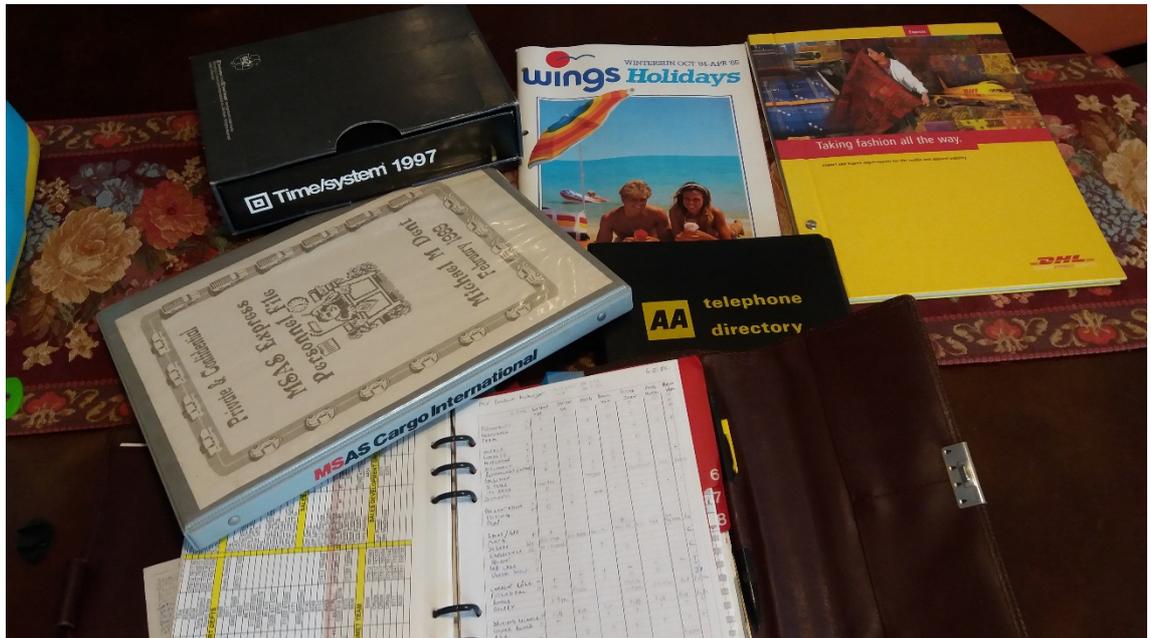
'A' Time diary showing interview notes (including check for colour blindness), MSAS

Cargo International Personnel file, Wings Holidays Summer Brochure 1985,

AA Internal Telephone Directory & DHL Textile Industry Sales Guide.

DHL Market Segmentation Toolkit.

Afterword

The purpose of this 'Afterword' is to tie up some loose ends, describe some of the problems and issues that I have encountered within this thesis and give a richer picture or 'gestalt' of myself.   Once more it goes without saying that this is not meant to be any form of post-facto rationalisation of my life, how it has progressed or how certain events have "coloured" subsequent outcomes thus, magically absolving myself of any responsibility.   It may, however, serve as a useful direction sign for future researchers - if only to say "do not go this way".

For me, apart from the cycle of continuous improvement espoused by Deming, it is also part of the larger mission of my own self actualisation as proposed by Maslow (1954). As (Kuang, 2011) has identified, the pursuit of academic publications is usually driven by ambition for promotion and to gain respect and credibility, in later life it is done for self-fulfilment.   But in addition, as Adam Smith identified, there is a rôle for a philosopher who understands the workings of political economy to safeguard the public interest from what he saw as the mutually conflicting objectives of Landowners, Wage Earners and Business.   The latter in particular *"who should be long and carefully examined, not only with the most scrupulous, but with the most suspicious attention,"* and *"who have generally an interest to deceive and even surpress the publick"*. (Campbell & Skinner, 1978, p. 283).   This thesis will, hopefully, indeed provide the public with some greater understanding which derives from the Abductive form of research.

I could expound at length about the grief, grind and general pain associated with a PhD. But, this will educate few, and as far as I can determine 'goes with the territory'. For

those yet to embark on this particular sisyphusian mission I would like to quote the standard caveats; have you really got the time, endeavour, patience, pain threshold, tenacity, diligence and sheer bloody mindedness to complete this? Are your family at minimum understanding - if not actually fully onside? Are you sufficiently interested in the topic to have no other major interest for the next 5 years? And do you realise that even if you succeed that, your earnings potential (notwithstanding the opportunity costs) within the Corporate world are possibly even *less* than if you had **not** completed a PhD! (The Disposable Academic: Why doing a PhD is often a waste of time, 2010). If any of these answers are in the negative then you would be well advised to walk away and undertake a less onerous mission with a slightly higher probability of success. If all the answers to these questions are indeed positive, then you may still do well to think again anyway.

As one further final twist of the reflective cycle (and of course on a positive note to conclude)[167] I remember the seminal work by Huw Benyon (1973) 'Working for Ford', as I sit here one warm tropical evening before I press 'Print' and deliver my thesis to the book binders. His case study had an impact. I hope mine does too. Either way I sincerely hope you have enjoyed reading this.

ENDS

Kuala Lumpur 2016

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[167] Consistent (I hope) with my Brand Map.