

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 Gods⁶⁵. 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

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.

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 marketer 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 section⁶⁷ 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.

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 solve 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 be 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 interrelated⁶⁸. 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

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 view⁶⁹. 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 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.

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 ‘updates’) 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 reflection⁷⁰ and striving for continuous improvement. These are all attributes that I strongly identify with⁷¹.

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

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.

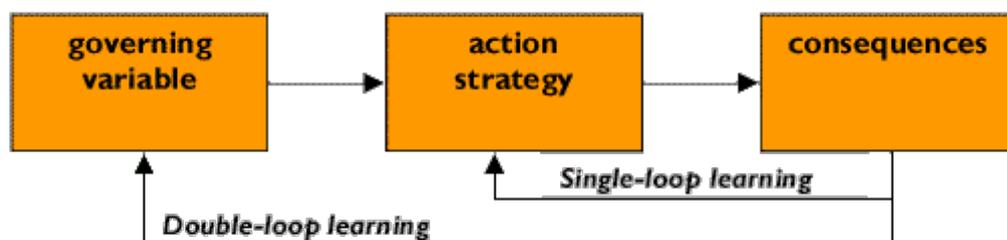


Figure 2.1 Single & Double Loop Learning

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 died⁷²) 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 Madonna⁷³. 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

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 Successful 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 exactly because this was the kind of thing that I knew.

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 Theory⁷⁴

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.

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 phenomenologically 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*

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.

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

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.

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 Vedas⁷⁸ 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.

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.

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 Maharishi 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

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 Tzu⁸⁰ 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

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).

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 Schema⁸² to explain how there can be different, yet equally valid accounts of reality depending on which constructional system is used (Küng, 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

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

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 Marketeer⁸⁴

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.

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 marketer. 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 connections⁸⁵ 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

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

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 ones⁸⁷.

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).

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 wanting⁸⁸. Clearly 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.

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.

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 treadmill⁹⁰



Figure 2.4 Life on the Treadmill

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

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 Experiences⁹²

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

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 Consulting	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

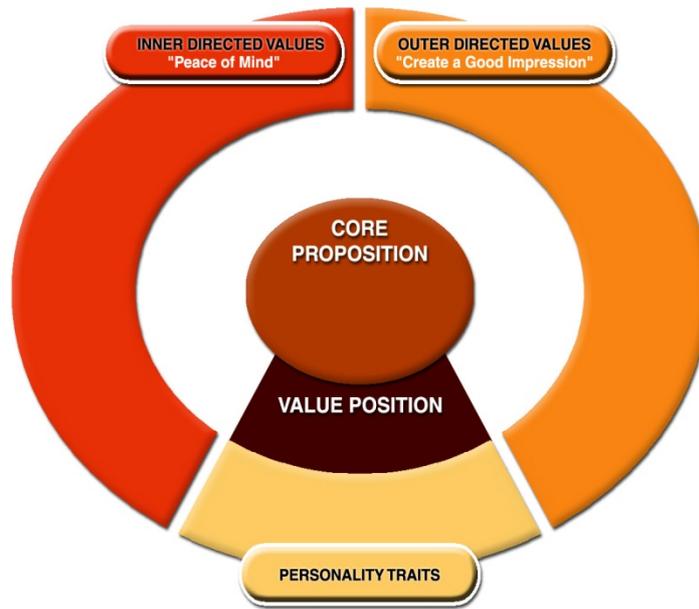


Figure 2.6 The Brand Map

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 traveller⁹³ born in Scotland but forged in Sheffield⁹⁴, 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).



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

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 Life⁹⁶) 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

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

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 meetings⁹⁸ (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 interconnectedness 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.

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

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 Coordinator). 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

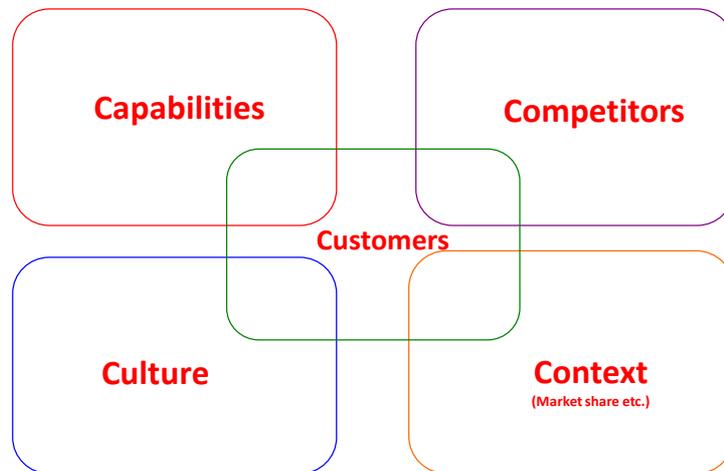


Figure 2.9 The DHL 5C Analysis

2.6.6 The Five C Analysis

In this section, I use the DHL 5C analysis (Customers, Competitors, Capabilities¹⁰⁰, 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.

¹⁰⁰ I distinguish between Competencies and Capabilities 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 Collaborators 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). Triangulation¹⁰² 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.

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 Gods¹⁰³. 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

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 marketer as it contributes to the bank of tacit knowledge which enables superior performance.