CHAPTER 1  INTRODUCTION:
Finding My Way

The thesis, it’s proposition and questions
Approach and methodology
Research findings
Positioning myself
Writing the thesis
I desire a new future
Somewhere where I can be myself

It will be different
If only I could leave where I am

But then I think.
Make it different where I am

A dear friend said to me
You are a poet and a cake maker

What a wonderful life I thought
I couldn’t imagine anything nicer

But I can’t be this,
I am stuck at work and at home

Maybe it doesn’t have to be this way?
So now I imagine things are perfect as they are

I can be what I want to be
Exactly where I am.

At home and at work
And as I write I dream that I am a poet.

THE THESIS, ITS PROPOSITION AND QUESTIONS

I have always thought deeply about organisations and their impact on the people within them. More so, as the pace of change and complexity speeds up, with many organisations implementing change through continual rounds of restructuring. I observed those around me, as well as my own struggle and the way I often stayed silent within organisations. I undertook this research, determined to explore my own perspectives and experiences over a period of time and to discover some new insights and meaning for myself about organisations.

From my perspective (as a manager within the public sector), what I generally saw going on in organisations revolved around the need to have staff with the skills or potential to meet a myriad of needs such as organisational objectives; planned outcomes; productivity and quality goals; stakeholder and customer requirements; community, political and industrial
imperatives. In response to these needs, people endeavoured to work effectively and efficiently, only to find that they were often restructured, disciplined, moved, made redundant, told to work differently, harder, faster and to be the ‘clever’ worker. One moment individualism was promoted and rewarded, next it was team work and collaboration. Quality was ‘in’ and so was accountability and responsibility. Structures were becoming flatter, organisations becoming leaner - and meaner! Those who loved challenge and change thrived, while others struggled, lost interest and didn’t quite understand it all. At times, nearly all felt despondent, thought of the ‘good old days’ and wondered what organisation they could move to, to get away from it all. There was always blame - blaming both those above and those below in the pecking order; and a cloak of secrecy - the unspoken ‘I know more about this than you, so leave it to me’.

A Gap Between Theory and Experience

Working in and critically reflecting in this context for over 20 years, it seemed to me that organisations were becoming more and more out of control, while paradoxically, imposing more and more controls. As I commenced my research Masters, I initially believed that I would be able to find some answers to the problems through the theories and models that I was studying. Unfortunately, the gap between the theory that I was reading and the reality that I was experiencing, was too wide. So, I began a kind of meta reflection on my work projects and work experience.

Reflection is a process of knowing how we know. It is an act of turning back upon ourselves. It is the only chance we have to discover our blindness and to recognize that the certainties and knowledge of others are, respectively, as overwhelming and tenuous as our own. (Maturana & Varela, 1987, p 24)

I tried to discover my ‘blindness’ and research my way towards a deeper understanding of my perceptions about organisations. During my research, I often had ‘aha’ experiences and thought that I had found answers to some of the questions I was asking. I then believed that if others could look at it this (i.e., my) way, then we would all find it easier to understand organisational issues and to work together. However, each time I discussed my ideas and insights with others I usually found that they saw it differently. The more I researched, the more I became convinced that there were no universal answers or ‘quick fix’ solutions. Think
of all the solutions that the experts have given us - and I ask, how much has really changed? All I am able to do is share my thoughts with others.

But was this all that I wanted to share? The more I thought about it, the more I realised that I wanted to share what was in my heart and soul and that this is what usually remains invisible and unspoken within organisations. In realising this, two key propositions emerged:

1. There is a need for continual movement and the recognition that this is what occurs all around us, whether we are conscious of it or not. We create a lot of problems for ourselves when we pretend things are static and try to stick to one model or one paradigm or one process.

2. Many critical things remain invisible and unspoken in organisations and consequently untheorised. This usually centres around issues such as love, spirituality and involvement of both head and heart in organisations.

My inquiry occurred at three levels: analytical, reflective and insightful. All three approaches have led to research themes and at times, a synergistic combination of these approaches have resulted in themes. Through this approach, a number of questions kept resurfacing, questions that kept me passionately involved, but ones that I could not necessarily find ‘the answer’ to.

Despite the body of ancient and modern wisdom and knowledge around and within us, why can’t we create the futures we desire so much?

We learn a lot intellectually, but why do we have such difficulty in implementing it in practice?

Why don’t our practices match our theories?

We think that by changing plans, skills and outcomes, we can change organisations. Why can’t we see that the changes come from processes, relationships and primarily from within ourselves?

Why do we increase our focus on controls, when our traditional methods are failing us more and more?

How can we resurface spirituality within organisations?

How can we make the invisible, visible?

Is what I am experiencing with the people I work with, what the whole organisation is experiencing?
I found it difficult to keep on researching with so many unanswered questions. However, Reinharz (1992, p 9) defines research as the “production of a publicly scrutinizable analysis of a phenomena with the intent of clarification”. The questions kept me focused on the phenomena that I was researching, as I attempted to clarify sources of confusion and despair often felt by people within organisations. There were no clear answers and a key paradox\(^1\) that emerged was that even though change depends on learning, learning is not sustaining our change.

But if there were no universal answers and no solutions, why write a thesis? Because I believe that it’s vitally important that this be acknowledged. Because all I can do is try to make meaning of my own experiences in a particular locality. I hope that my questions and insights will raise further questions for others - to think deeper and braver than I have been able to. To continue the search for greater understanding and awareness about what organisational life means to them, in their own locality and to surface the invisible and unspoken.

As defined by Bateson (1972), the process of making meaning involves combining events or objects that can be separated by what he calls a ‘slash mark’. If an observer sees only what’s on one side of the slash mark, he/she can usually successfully guess about what’s on the other side of the slash mark. This is because what’s on one side of the slash contains information or has meaning about what’s on the other side (Bateson, 1972). Therefore, I’m using what I’ve observed within organisations, to ‘guess’ about the other side, i.e., the invisible and unspoken within organisations.

I acknowledge that what has entered my consciousness during this research journey, is no doubt only a part of the ‘truth’ of organisational systems, but it is my own truth as interpreted from my experiences and context within which I work and from what I could see. This may at times unintentionally “distort the truth of the larger whole” (Bateson, 1972, p 144) and “reality may be something quite different” (Maturana & Varela, 1987, p 244).

In searching for my own truth, I undertook three things during my research and thesis-writing:

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\(^1\) Paradox can be defined in general as a “logical contradiction arrived at through valid deductions from apparently non-contradictory premises” (Wilden, 1980, p 103).

M Staron 1999  A Personal Perspective on Organizations
1. to share my experiences and insights about organisations;
2. to describe the process I went through as I researched and wrote my thesis; and
3. to align my research methodologies with my experiences within organisations.

I focused more on my own experiences than on pursuing other studies of organisations. The approaches that I use are frequently described as alternative approaches to the practice and outcomes of research, as they do not rely on the “three canons of inquiry: empiricism, objectivity, and control” (Singleton & Straits, 1999 p 37). When describing alternate approaches, Reinharz (1992, p 217 - 218) cites a Canadian social psychologist Melamed, who wrote “about research as a process rather than a product, about research as experiences rather than work, and research as lived rather than done”. My research was a process, based on experience and very much ‘lived’.

What Is An Organisation?

I used to be unquestioning and accepting of definitions of organisations\(^2\) and believed that they realistically portrayed what organisations were. I don’t think this any more. I have this sense of everyone seeing the organisation as something outside of themselves. As a thing within which we work. This thing can make our lives miserable, set us goals which we may, or may not believe in, bring about change we may not want, yet at the same time provide us with a comfort zone.

I see us all working in different parts within the organisation, trying each day to achieve something - to clear some pile of paper off our desks, answer phone calls, network, make plans, produce outcomes. We do these things for the organisation - yet I still feel that the organisation is an illusion. Is it really only about all this? Or is the organisation like a living system that has to breath, eat, produce, excrete and have a blood system to connect us all together. And deep inside a heart, which pumps life into the organisation - to hurt, love and feel. And a soul, which is invisible and indescribable, but perhaps the most important part of all.

\(^2\) "Conventional texts on management often define organizations as groups of people united by a common goal" (Morgan, 1989, p 30).
People ask me what is the heart and soul of an organisation?  
I have to say that I don’t know

If we knew perhaps we could create it  
It’s mysterious and unknowable

We just know that it’s missing  
And we keep searching for it

If we stayed in touch with our own heart and soul,  
We’d stay in touch with the heart and soul of our organisations.

When asked about the soul, Krishnamurti (in Lutyens, 1954, pp 233 - 234) answered in this way:

The word ‘soul’ implies something beyond mere physical existence, does it not? There is your physical body, and also your character, your tendencies, your virtues; and transcending all this you say there is the soul. If that state exists at all, it must be spiritual, something which has the quality of timelessness.

Whyte (1994, p 13) describes soul as the “indefinable essence of a person’s spirit and being” By over-focusing on the tangibles and production, the rest of the system slowly dies. By particularly ignoring the interconnectedness, the feelings and the soul, unhealthy organisations flourish.

Our lack of soul is our refusal to open to a full experience of the world. ... The core of difficulty at the heart of modern work life is its abstraction from many of the ancient cycles of life that allow the silence and time in which true appreciation and experience can take place. (Whyte, 1994, p 23)

An organisation has to be something more than just a place we work in to produce outputs. It has to be a living, breathing organism that is a reflection of all of us - of our own spirit, vitality and soul and not made up of the invisible ‘them’.

Embarrassment will arise as we turn to face soul and spirit, which our positivist ethic has taught us to disparage and revile. Soul and spirit are felt to be superstitions of a bygone era, discredited by scientific advancement and rejected by secular society. It will hurt the pride of many Australians to have to admit to the existence of another reality - a reality long denied by ‘enlightened’ families, ‘modern’ institutions and ‘progressive’ groups. Yet when the unconscious is encountered as habitual defences
fall away, soul and spirit turn out to be powerfully real, and the values that caused us to deny them will be revealed as empty prejudices supported by an inadequate ideology. But embarrassment, guilt, and shame will plague us before we can acknowledge the reality of spirit, because we will feel that we are letting the side down, not living up to modern expectations, and becoming somehow ‘un-Australian’. (Tacey, 1995, p 124)

Initially when I read about organisational theories, such as those espoused by Fullan (1993), Kanter (1983, 1997), Senge (1992), Peters (1992), Morgan (1986, 1989), Covey (1989), Redfield and Carol (1995), Stewart (1990) and O’Toole (1993), I felt inspired about the solutions they presented. However, over time I began to feel that many of the organisational theories that I have explored have played a trick on us. There is often an assumption that if, for example, we follow the ‘ten’ rules, it will work out or if we develop new understandings or implement new theories, all will be well - we’ll understand each other and the vision for the organisation, we’ll work well together, productivity will increase, outcomes will improve and our ‘masters’ will reward us. In my work experience, I’ve not seen this happen. The assumptions are fundamentally flawed - they do not take into account the unpredictability of human nature, of human needs, of human fickleness and the mystery of humanness. Should this be our real starting point?

**APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY**

I needed to study what I was actually experiencing and observing. According to Reinharz (1984), this is not what researchers usually do. Researchers (including herself, initially) usually follow a pattern of rigid adherence to problem formation, data collection and data analysis. However, research in the field can be experienced as “an unfolding, ever-changing process” (Reinharz, 1984, p 150). This is what I experienced regularly and found that as a participant/observer within an organisation, my questions kept changing and it was difficult to identify a key proposition. I suffered a lot of anxiety and doubt about the approach that I took and I frequently express these feelings throughout the thesis. As stated by Bergson (1992, p 212), feelings are an integral part of our experiences and cannot be denied:

We are absolutely sure only of what experience gives us; but we should accept experience wholly, and our feelings are a part of it by the same right as our perceptions, consequently, by the same right as “things”. In the eyes of William James, the whole man counts.
In bringing my whole self to the research process, I wanted to work towards what Reinharz (1984, p 151) achieved with her later studies, when she developed a “greater sense of identity and trust in [herself ... and could] ignore the mythical rules and work according to an inner set of guidelines that permitted flexibility and change”. Shepherd (1993, p 166) describes this process as a nurturing approach to research:

A nurturing approach involves maintaining an openness to many possibilities, different ways of developing. It allows unconscious processes, the movement of the spirit, and the voice of the soul to speak rather than limiting us to information from only rational sources. Entering this liminal, somewhat chaotic state allows for the negotiation of new meanings and connections. Seeking clarity, clear perception, or fixed ideas too early is like aborting the potential growth of a germinating seed by unearthing it too soon.

We cannot separate research from learning. Isn’t research the process of learning, and learning research? Hill\(^3\) (1997, pers. com.) defines research as a special kind of learning:

[Research is a] systemic, critical investigation, conducted within a particular framework, and following selected procedures to increase the sum of human knowledge (i.e., it is a special case of learning - of things that are new to everyone, often by virtue of the specific context).

If the learning we are to do within the Masters is to be at the epistemic cognitive level, this involves not just the acquiring of new knowledge, but also “the processes an individual invokes to monitor the epistemic nature of problems and the truth value of alternative solutions” (Kitchener, 1983, p 225). In reflecting on my research, I believe that this is the process I have undertaken and despite my recurring confusion and doubts, I’ve managed to remain with constantly changing questions and the confusion this creates. Surely more of a meta learning and meta research journey than the traditional linear approach?

**Research Framework**

A number of interconnected methodologies emerged as most congruent with what and how I wanted to research. Consequently, a number of interrelated methods emerged, that were most appropriate for the qualitative data collection processes that I used (see Figure 1).

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\(^3\) Stuart Hill is Professor of Social Inquiry, University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury.
Research Methodologies

1. Heuristics Approach

A heuristics approach was essential to my topic and style of research. As described by Douglass and Moustakas (1985, p 53):

Heuristics encourages the researcher to go wide open and to pursue an original path that has its origins within the self and that discovers its direction and meaning within the self. ... It guides human beings in the process of asking questions about phenomena that disturb and challenge their own existence.

I did go 'wide open' and I did continuously ask questions about things that I observed, that 'disturbed and challenged my own existence'. My approach was very much centred in the self and my research reaffirmed the importance of the individual within an organisation. I believe that the following quote from Krieger (1991, pp 47 - 48) helps to explain my position in undertaking research that is based on self:

This grasping for my own view creates a picture that is, by many standards, not quite right. However, that picture may provide a lens that is helpful for envisaging other realities as well as my own and that clarifies methodological issues. It is in the nature of self, I think, to work in this way - not to map the world in a formally correct sense, but in a manner that highlights some things more than others and that connects events in particular ways. The presence of the self is organizing of reality and of how we see events. The self, in coalescing perception, produces a picture that has an order determined, significantly, by emotional emphases. Strategies for using individuality, subjective vision, or a more full sense of the self in social science may cause us to produce different types of compositions for understanding our experiences than more standard strategies do. They may result in different forms of expression, but these
forms will have a structure that is truthful to the degree that it faithfully represents the experiences of an observer. That experience includes the observer's inner life: dreams, the imagery, the sense of "how it is for me" to be here, to see this, to relate it to you.

Knowing the self and taking a personal stance was essential to what and how I researched. Reinharz (1984) provides the views of a substantial range of scholars, from Descartes who argues for finding knowledge within one self, to Polanyi who views all knowledge as a fusion of subjectivity and objectivity. "The very striving for a scientific, logical, empirical quantitative ideal is as much a product of subjective bias ... as is the repudiation of the intuitive, imaginative, personal, self-disclosing ideal" (Reinharz, 1984, p 246).

As my research and learning proceeded heuristically, it took a path of its own. This is because

it is self-directed, self-motivated, and open to spontaneous shifts. It defies the shackles of convention and tradition. With distinctive energy and rhythm, it pushes beyond the known, the expected, or the merely possible. Without the restraining leash of formal hypotheses, and free from external methodological structures that limit awareness or channel it, the one who searches heuristically may draw upon the perceptual powers afforded by maturation, intuition, and direct experience. (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p 44)

2. Grounded Theory Methodology

Grounded theory methodology supported me in my research process, since "one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p 23). As I collected data for my research, I questioned existing theories and assumptions and generated my own theories and models about organisations, based on my own personal perspectives.

3. Feminist Perspective

Even though I did not undertake feminist research as such (i.e., conduct research specifically for the benefit of women), feminist researchers frequently employ many of the approaches I used. My research was therefore conducted through a feminist perspective, which involved me in researching both emotionally, as well as intellectually.

[A] major feature of feminist epistemology is its refusal to ignore the emotional dimension of the conduct of inquiry ....[which] involves not only acknowledgment of
the affective dimension of research, but also recognition that emotions serve as a source of insight or a signal of rupture in social reality. (Fonow & Cook, 1991, p 9)

Or as described by Singleton and Straits (1999, p 38) "Research can be very haphazard, sometimes exhilarating, and sometimes frustrating, so that to do scientific work requires a deep emotional commitment".

I was also involved in reflexive processes, which enabled me to reflect on and critically examine the subject of my research, as well as the nature of my research process (Fonow & Cook, 1991). Consequently, I was involved in a process of consciousness raising, described by MacKinnon (in Reinharz, 1992) as a feminist process, through which we are able to understand our experiences from our own point of view. I also dealt "with dilemmas that have no absolute solutions" and this is a process frequently associated with feminist research (Reinharz, 1992, p 4).

4. Human Inquiry

I focused on human endeavour within organisations and the way organisations were affecting both myself and those around me. I used processes that integrated "systematic inquiry with human interpersonal and emotional development ... [which] makes the whole venture a truly human inquiry" (Reason, 1988, p 33). When human inquiry informs our practice in the world, it becomes particularly important (Reason, 1988). With, for example, my Research Learning Group and my Critical Research Friends, we regularly critiqued my work and examined different perspectives that I could take. Experiences such as these, which at times were informed by my readings of theoretical models and descriptions, helped me develop my views about organisations and establish my research outcomes.

5. Fuzzy Logic

Fuzzy Logic became an underlying methodology and platform to my research. It supported me in moving beyond rational, numerical and linear thinking and analysis, to thinking and analysing in a way that matches our environment, which is filled with vagueness, chaos and uncertainty. Fuzzy logic makes room for alternatives and diversity and accepts that not all can be controlled and calculated. There is no need to accept 'A' or 'B' as the solution, but to make room for both 'A' and 'B'. Fuzzy logic enabled me to stay with the differences and vagueness throughout my research process. As I researched and spoke to people, each person
or group had their own world view and own interpretation of how things should be done. In not being prepared to go with the majority and discount the multiplicity of minority views and differences, I looked at many issues from many points of view. There is no neat and tidy conclusion that I can draw. *The answers keep changing as my awareness levels change.*

**Research Methods**

I needed to find methods that matched both my research methodologies and experiences in organisations and allowed the emotional, as well as the intellectual to be expressed. Therefore, my methods needed to be unplanned, chaotic, circular and changing, resulting in greater understanding over time and providing new insights.

1. **Diary**

My major need was to critically reflect on my research and I did this through a Diary. The Diary became the anchoring method around which other methods emerged, such as being a participant/observer. These methods remained quite congruent with my topic and my methodological approach.

As my primary source of data, the Diary is the basis of most of my thesis-writing. I often transpose much of my Diary directly into my thesis. I occasionally indicate this within the thesis or by noting it as a footnote. I also provide in the Appendices, some extracts from the Diary.

2. **Participant/Observer**

As a participant/observer, i.e., a manager within a large organisation, with opportunities to consult across a number of other organisations, I was able to directly study various phenomena within organisations, my own reactions to those phenomena and what it meant to me to be a member of a large and complex organisation.

3. **Research Learning Group**

My Research Learning Group was one group that I regularly worked with, that was external to the organisation I worked in. We commenced at the beginning of our research, early in 1995, as a group of six. By 1997, by mutual agreement, some members had left and we
became a group of four. All group members are research students at the University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury. All are PhD students, excluding myself. We meet every six weeks for three hours and in detail, have examined each others work. We are a tight-knit group, all females, either working in large organisations or self-employed. Our focus is similar, in that our research is quite personal, centred in the self, focusing on change and the creation of healthier and more caring environments and relationships.

4. Critical Research Friends

I also shared my inquiry with a number of Critical Research Friends, who were either colleagues at work or academic ‘friends’ in universities. We discussed and analysed many of our mutual work experiences and differing points of view and at times, analysed my research approach and methodology.

Validity and Reliability

I have not attempted to achieve validity and reliability of my research findings through methods such as measurement and experiment. Rather, it emerges from the integrity with which I approach my subjective and objective experiences and develop my point of view. This approach has been undertaken with high levels of awareness, enduring a number of feedback loops and employing different ways of knowing, such as observation, reflection and interaction with others. Through a transparent audit trail and extensive documentation of the processes that I used, I believe that I have achieved a high level of validity and reliability within this research.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

I brought my whole self to the research journey - emotionally, spiritually, intellectually and physically. I believe that this is what we need to bring to our organisations. At the beginning of my research, I thought organisations needed to operate within new paradigms. At the end of my research journey, I was able to see that I (and organisations) needed to move beyond paradigms, that paradigms are just another conceptual model.
Having realised this, I am still trying to make sense of what this might mean, without putting it into another conceptual model. Is this possible? A paradox that emerged for me was that at times, I needed to resort to conceptual models as a way of describing my research outcomes. I don't know how to do it differently. I have realised that throughout the thesis, I situated my work within various established paradigms without necessarily subscribing to them. This flows naturally from my reflective, self-directed inquiry.

My findings can be seen in terms of outputs and outcomes, which result from the analytical, reflective and insightful levels that I research and learn at. The outputs are largely categoric and generalisable, and result from the analysis, understanding and interpretation of the inquiry events. The outcomes, which form the major part of my findings, are the insights that I, as an inquirer, gain from interacting with the subject of my inquiry. These are largely values based and interpretive. Such intuitive insights and learning are what one would expect from a critically reflective, learning inquirer. It should also not be surprising to find that I am inspired by my dreams and ideals about organisational life.

I have questioned assumptions underlying organisational theories and acknowledged that human beings are unpredictable. Consequently our behaviour in organisations is unpredictable and we do not behave as described in many organisational theories or organisational plans. Therefore, I developed my own set of assumptions and a whole-of-organisation model of complexity, which identifies the individual as the key to effectiveness within organisations. Individuals need to be guided by principles, relevant to the individual and to groups.

A criticism of my work may be that it’s seen to be for myself and not so much for others, as I particularly wanted to get to know myself better during the research process. However, as Krishnamurti (in Lutyens, 1954, p 12) says, “to know oneself is to study oneself in action, which is relationship”. And through my own actions, in relationship with others, I want to help change the way things are within organisations. I did my research as part of my daily work and personal experiences and I looked deep inside myself. This was not easy to do.

Everyone can have noticed that it is more difficult to make progress in the knowledge of oneself than in the knowledge of the external world. Outside oneself, the effort to learn is natural; one makes it with increasing facility; one applies rules. Within, attention must remain tense and progress become more and more painful; it is as though one were going against the natural bent. (Bergson, 1992, p 41)
Bergson (1992, p. 41) also asks: "Is there not something surprising in this?" We would think that we know our internal selves best. However, our minds keep focused on external matters and when we do focus on the internal, it has a dramatic impact on our lives and our research. Consequently, I found that I changed during the process. I now find myself relating to others differently - more openly and honestly and with less vulnerability. The way I approach my work has changed, as I more readily express my views and beliefs, more readily listen to others and integrate into work plans and actions, my beliefs and understanding. This impacts on the organisational strategies, programs and group facilitation that I become involved in. The praxis within my work is more conscious and I am now able to access many sources of documents, not only for myself but also for those that I work with. It is from a stronger philosophical, theoretical and experiential basis that I am now able to stand my ground and either challenge or support practices within organisations.

_I searched for many things during my research_  
And really believed in my dream

_If only I could find the organisation to work in_  
Where I could be true to myself and believe

_So I’d better wait until things change_  
And then I’ll be able to live and work, the way that I want to

_But now that my research is over_  
I reflect on what I’ve been searching for

_It comes from within me,_  
_If I want to be more spiritual and giving_

_I need to do it now_  
_Exactly where I am_

_And stop waiting for others to change_  
_Or for the job that will make it different._

_I am now more accepting of what is_  
_And know I just need to ‘be’. _
POSITIONING MYSELF

I position myself within this thesis as a female, white Caucasian, born and brought up in Australia with a working-class, mid-European background, choosing to speak from my own voice (constructed as it may be by events and others around me) about the things that are very important to me in my life.

I was greatly influenced by Harvie\(^4\) (1997, pers. com.), who speaks about articulating the body of the writer to the body of the text and the way we can choose to write differently. She asks, how many of us put aside what we really want to write about and only include what we believe is acceptable for examination? How do we overcome the issues of embodiment, of passion, of being different or speaking differently to that which is expected traditionally? How do we talk about heart, when it means so many different things to so many people? Harvie (1997, pers. com.) believes that our own voice is constructed by the language and discourse of the culture that we live in and that our context, values and commitments need to be exposed. Therefore, sex, gender, ethnic position, class, social status all need to be in the text - it's the position from which we speak. According to Harvie (1997, pers. com.), we need to express how we need the text to be read, that we are not speaking from a masterly, universal voice, but that the reference point is 'me'. It is in this context, that I undertake to explain my own position.

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\begin{align*}
I \ & \ have \ always \ yeared \ to \ sing \\
& \ \text{To \ pour \ out \ my \ heart} \\
Some \ & \ singers \ reduce \ me \ to \ tears \\
I \ & \ wish \ I \ had \ a \ voice \ with \ which \ to \ express \ my \ emotions \\
I \ & \ would \ then \ be \ content, \\
& \ \text{It's \ what \ I \ really \ want \ to \ do} \\
I \ & \ would \ also \ like \ to \ be \ able \ to \ speak \ out \\
& \ \text{To \ be \ fearless \ and \ say \ what \ I \ think} \\
Especially \ & \ when \ I \ think \ that \ I \ will \ be \ annihilated \\
I \ & \ want \ to \ have \ the \ courage \ to \ speak \ out
\end{align*}
\]

\(^4\) Mary Harvie spoke as a PhD post graduate student from Sydney University.

M Staron 1999 A Personal Perspective on Organisations
And I really want a happy family
One that loves being together
That is understanding and kind
That works through the differences gently
And I want to be madly and passionately in love
Filled with desire and excitement
Feeling a tingle inside me
Thrilled to always be with him

But I can’t sing
And I often stay silent when someone is angry
And my family sometimes gets angry
And not everyone likes being together
And I don’t always feel passionate about my partner
And I sometimes want him to be different

But isn’t it strange
I suddenly find myself writing poetry

From my heart and from my emotions
I can now express myself about anything I want to
Have I been given what I want
But in a way that I would never have imagined?

I was brought up not to question authority, in fact with a fear of authority and a great desire never to be singled out for attention. I quietly survived my high school years, being very shy. When I left school, I went to university and being young (sixteen), it was quite a struggle for me as I lacked confidence in myself. I could be described as “the adolescent female .... [who] has frequently been rewarded for her quiet predictability, her competent though perhaps unimaginative work, and her obedience and conformity” (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986, p 65).

During my twenties and thirties, I had great respect (or fear?) for authority and recognised in myself what Belenky et al (1986, p 39 - 40) describes as the ‘received knowers’ deferral to authority, where the perception is that “authorities have the capacity for constructing knowledge. ... [and we] assume that all authorities are infinitely capable of receiving and retaining ‘the right answer’ with impeccable precision”. I believed that those with the greatest
knowledge and experience would have the most senior positions. I also believed that the most senior people within the organisation would of course, always keep in mind what was best for the greater good of all. Over the years I was to discover otherwise.

In my late thirties, I actively started searching for something more meaningful in my life. I wanted to see things ‘as they really are’. I turned to meditation and a desire to learn about the philosophy and practice of Buddhism. My priority in life became my own spiritual development and a search for my own vision and understanding that would come from deep within myself. I must have somewhere along the way become a ‘constructivist woman’.

Most constructivist women actively reflect on how their judgments, attitudes, and behavior coalesce into some internal experience of moral consistency. More than any other group, they are seriously preoccupied with the moral or spiritual dimension of their lives. (Belenky et al, 1986, p 150)

This has had a great influence on the way that I research and write, involving me in developing “a new conception of truth as personal, private, and subjectively known or intuited” (Belenky et al, 1986, p 54).

My fear of authority needed to be tackled. When I decided that I would do a Masters degree, I knew it could only be by research and not course work. It was time for me to tackle a subject I really wanted to learn about - to have a choice in my study and pursue it in some depth. I needed to be the authority and the only thing I could be the authority on was my own experience and views. These experiences and views come from over 20 years as a manager, group facilitator, teacher, trainer and consultant in large and complex bureaucracies. As described by Krieger (1991, p 39), I wanted to speak “as a person who had read and practised in the area and who was trying to make sense just as herself”.

What I was really doing was finding my own voice.

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5 My work focus is on designing and implementing professional development strategies and programs, organisational change strategies and strategic thinking and planning.

M Staron 1999  A Personal Perspective on Organisations
I want to find my own voice
I want to say what I want to say
I want to have the courage to say it
I don’t expect you all to agree with me
I know that you may see things differently.

Many feminist researchers have discovered that ‘finding one’s voice’ is a crucial process of their research and writing. During this phase the researcher understands a phenomenon and finds a way of communicating that understanding” (Reinharz, 1992, p 16). I chose an area I was passionately interested in - organisations and the experience I had of being in a number of large bureaucratic ones. I focused on finding a place for both rationality and intuition, objectivity and subjectivity, listening and speaking, emotionalism and intellectualism, control and support, individualism and community. In this way, the thesis has enabled me to disclose who I am, what I think and where my research journey led me. From my background, I hope you will understand how important this was for me.

The paradigm that I am positioned in can be described as constructivist humanistic/spiritual. This paradigm involves me in speaking from a personal and emotional perspective, focusing on issues and practices that concern me deeply and which are affected by my relationship with myself, as well as with others. As Guba and Lincoln (1989, p 88) express it, adherents of the constructivist paradigm assert “that it is impossible to separate the inquirer from the inquired into. It is precisely their interaction that creates the data that will emerge from the inquiry”. There is a close connection between this and my spirituality, as from a spiritual point of view, I believe that we have to search for the truth that resides within ourselves and that we cannot separate ourselves from the people and events around us. As spirituality is mysterious and usually one of the ‘invisibles’ within organisations, it remains so during much of my research and thesis-writing, but can be felt as an underlying platform from which I work, write and view the world.

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6 Constructivism states that “reality exists only in the context of a mental framework (construct) for thinking about it” and can only be seen through a window of theory and a value window (Guba, 1990, p 25).

M Staron 1999  A Personal Perspective on Organisations
WRITING THE THESIS

My Plan Grew Out Of My Writing

My insights did not come in neat, logical bundles and my writing reflects this. I did not, could not, categorise and plan my thesis prior to writing it - instead, the plan grew out of my writing, not vice versa. Even though I spent a lot of time thinking about how to present my feelings, thoughts, experiences, ideas and designing a number of elaborate plans for logical sections so that I avoided repetition, I couldn't do it. I could not plan. It seems that to put a linear logical plan into my research and writing destroys it. The conclusions and insights I draw won't make sense - they have emerged out of a process at particular points in time. Others have found it similarly difficult to rearrange their work. When writing, Krieger (1991) finds that she cannot rearrange something she has written into another shape or form. If something different or better is required, she would have to discard the work and start again. What I'm going to do is present my work in the way it occurred over the last few years.

I now believe that a lot of the planning we do, or perhaps the way we do it in organisations is futile - it always comes out differently to that which was planned. If I plan and then write my thesis according to the plan, it's a lie as to how it actually happened. A plan would only tell of my "desire to control a reality that is slippery and evasive and perplexing beyond comprehension" (Wheatley, 1994, pp 26). I will have "reduced and described and separated things into cause and effect, and drawn the world in lines and boxes" (Wheatley, 1994, pp 27 - 28). I've attempted to be linear and logical for most of my life - I now need to do it differently. My plan will unfold as I write my thesis.

The environment remains uncreated until we interact with it; there is no describing it until we engage with it. Abstract planning divorced from action becomes a cerebral activity of conjuring up a world that does not exist. (Wheatley, 1994, p 37)

The Need For Repetition

As I write, I will be describing two processes that occurred simultaneously and can't realistically be separated: 1) the process of writing my thesis; and 2) the process of coming to grips with my topic and methodology, i.e., for observing, experiencing and understanding organisations.
This process involved me in a number of repetitive cycles. This was the only way that I was able to come to grips with my research. To understand some of the conclusions that I drew and the models that I developed, you will need to experience these cycles of understanding as they emerged. As expressed by May (1983, p 136), “the most crucial fact about existence is that it emerges - that is, it is always in the process of becoming, always developing in time, and is never to be defined as static points”. My deeper levels of understanding and intellectual reflection only emerged from questioning previous levels of understanding. My thinking evolved over a period of time and I present my research in the way that it happened.

There are a number of areas that I regularly re-examine, for example, systems concepts which I introduce in Chapter 3 and then re-examine in more detail in Chapter 4; spirituality which is discussed in Chapter 5 and again in Chapter 7; learning and change which is a core theme in the thesis and interwoven throughout the whole thesis; paradigms which have been interpreted in different and sometimes contradictory ways in various chapters, according to what was evolving out of my research at the time.

**Unsourced References**

Three quotes that I use by Caius Petronious, Marcel Proust and Valles are unsourced. The quotes were presented at conferences unreferenced and I have been unable to source them through extensive library searches. I have kept the quotes in the thesis because I believe that what they say is an integral part of this thesis; the quotes help to make the point that what I am seeing today in organisations, has been an ongoing problem for many centuries.

**Expression Through Poems**

When it was time to start writing the thesis, I struggled to organise my data. I eventually put aside my need to plan. I sat down at the computer and suddenly started writing poems. Many of them in the one day. A completely new experience for me. As I read the poems, I realised that in a nutshell, they were my ‘thesis’. They had somehow evolved out of my research. I had learnt to express myself in a new way.
I submit the poems as an indication of what I saw in hindsight and what really captured my interest throughout the process. They are not for ‘examination’ as such. My expression through poems reflects what Geertz (1993) describes as both the understanding of other’s understanding (that I tried to come to grips with), as well as the understanding that I developed for myself. To do this, we need to use as wide a range of expression, as possible.

The enormous diversity of modern thought as we in fact find it around us in every form from poems to equations must be acknowledged if we are to understand anything at all about the Life of the Mind, and that this can be accomplished without prejudice to the idea that human thinking has its own constraints and its own constancies. (Geertz, 1993, p 14)

The poems are a product of the culture I live in, the context within which I work and my own personal philosophies about life and work. Within this environment and these constraints, the poems (in addition to prose) helped me make meaning of my experiences.

**Constructing the Chapters**

In the thesis, each chapter has interconnecting themes and links that build on the repetition that was crucial to this research. This enabled organisational insights and research outputs and outcomes to emerge. However, each chapter does contain a central theme.

Chapter 1: Introduces and overviews the research topic, themes, findings and research process.

Chapter 2: Commences with a study of paradigms in organisations, then moves on to a general study of ‘thinking, doing, being organisations’.

Chapter 3: Briefly examines some systems concepts, followed by an examination of self and learning in relationship to organisations.

Chapter 4: Reviews systems concepts in more depth, as a way of examining behaviour in organisations.

Chapter 5: Delves into aspects of change and some of the illusions and feelings that we hold on to, which inhibit organisational insight and change.

Chapter 6: Focuses on spirituality, surfacing some of the invisible and unspoken perceptions within organisations.
Chapter 7: Examines emerging methodologies and methods in this research and their congruence with how things happen in organisations.

Chapter 8: Further examines behaviour within organisations and some of the changes that we need to make.

Chapter 9: Focuses on the need for organisational movement and creation of healthy organisations.

Chapter 10: Redefines organisational theories and models.

Chapter 11: Reviews my research journey.

In reflecting on this introductory chapter, I believe the reader will find it well laid out, with a high degree of logic as I introduce my research and present my approach and findings. However, in Chapter 2, I start living how I researched, sometimes with no real indication of where I am going. It just unfolds. I seek little closure and am doing what I said I would be doing in the *Introduction*. Therefore there may be a perceived contrast between the ‘thoroughness’ of Chapter 1 and the ‘looseness’ of the following chapters.
CHAPTER 2  CLARIFYING MY STARTING POINT:
Thinking, Doing, Being Organisations

Paradigms - the solution?
There must be more to it than this
Further connections and linkages needed to be made
Confusion and lack of congruence
PARADIGMS - THE SOLUTION?

When I began my research Masters, I planned to study paradigms within organisations as it seemed to me that through such a study, I would find a key solution to all the difficulties that I was experiencing within organisations. My initial proposition was that organisations could become increasingly healthy and productive if they encouraged a multiplicity of paradigms to co-exist within them. I turned to the writing of Guba (1990, p 17) for clarification of the word ‘paradigm’, but he states that “most persons ... are unable to offer any clear statement of its meaning”. Nevertheless, he then goes on to define paradigms in a generic sense, as “a basic set of beliefs that guides action” (p 17); or as “basic belief systems; they cannot be proven or disproven, but they represent the most fundamental positions we are willing to take” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p 80). I frequently hear people using the word ‘paradigm’ interchangeably with the word ‘mind set’ or ‘world view’.

My interest centered around the desire to explore why new paradigms, which are frequently acknowledged as necessary to the growth of organisations, are actually so hard, or even impossible to introduce. As I thought about this, a number of questions arose.

- How are we able to see things from a multiple paradigm point of view? Should we?
- What helps us recognise different paradigms, as well as our own paradigm?
- What identifies individuals and groups working successfully within and between paradigms?
- At what cost is it to the organisation to exclude the range of paradigms that exist in society?
- How can we experience different paradigms and learn and grow from the experience?

I thought that if I could find answers to questions such as these, my own confusion and uncertainty would be alleviated. However, the more I thought about the issues, the more I began to wonder if I was only relying on my intellect and whether this would help me solve questions such as these. I wondered whether rationality was at the core of paradigms, as paradigms present a static picture of a reality at a particular point in time. But reality constantly changes. Was there room for things such as spirituality? Perhaps a move from practices that were ego, power and control driven towards practices that were more non-
judgmental, selfless and grounded in humility were needed. How would we establish this within an organisation?

I also began to question whether it was healthy for organisations to label paradigms and put people or groups into them. It's a model, just like any other model, with all the inherent difficulties that models have. Once 'boxed', it seems to be very difficult for many people to change their views and recognise that they or others have moved out of the 'box'. Perhaps it's better to continuously acknowledge shifts and learning and to prize personal, spiritual and organisational development. If such growth occurs, the issue doesn't centre around which paradigm we belong to or are moving towards - the issue is that we are 'moving' and developing.

Unfortunately, it seems to me that organisations frequently identify and promote those who support sameness and mediocrity. Conflicting paradigms are squeezed out. It's disturbing to see within organisations, how many people are 'penalised' for working in a different paradigm (such as constructivism\(^7\)) to one that may be most common within the organisation (such as positivism\(^8\)). They are left out of meetings, lobbied against and have obstacles placed in front of changes that they are trying to model or bring about.

I've observed that frequently, planned and imposed changes do not create the shifts that need to occur. For example, policies are often ignored and training isn't usually transferred to the workplace. What does create true learning and readiness for change? Does it come from somewhere within? There's such a strong body of knowledge in existence, both ancient and modern, as well as our own knowingness. It seems that evidence and experience alone doesn't cause shifts and learning. Why do we still work in conflict and not focus on valuing diversity and a multiplicity of paradigms?

Over time, I began to observe and understand that basically, members within organisations collude to maintain existing paradigms - despite many attempts by some to change the culture. Argyris and Schon (1974) explain how such collusion can occur when people withhold information that would alter assumptions about each other. Such behaviour can be described as "self-sealing theory-in-use" and needs to be replaced by sharing directly observable data,

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\(^7\) Constructivism was defined in footnote 4.

\(^8\) Positivism is the "belief that there exists a reality out there" (Guba, 1990, p 19).
by sharing interpretations of that data, and by sharing our testing of the attributions we make about others. There is no way of doing this for ourselves without also doing it for and with others. The characteristics of the shared behavioural world must be changed, and they will change only as we envisage a different theory-in-use and begin to act on it. (Argyris & Schon, 1974, p 161)

**THERE MUST BE MORE TO IT THAN THIS**

The more I thought about issues and observed practices within organisations, the more I realised a study of paradigms would not solve my confusion - which was increasing instead of diminishing. Where could I find some answers to all the problems I saw within organisations? I gradually moved into a feeling of despair - I couldn’t really write about what I actually thought and felt, could I? It was far too un-academic! Perhaps it was best not to do a thesis, after all. As I shared my despair with one of my Critical Research Friends, Robert Woog⁹, we clarified that I needed to go on a general journey of exploration, as the areas that I wanted to research were so broad and interconnected. He coined the phrase for me that represented my research: *Thinking, Doing, Being Organisations*. My passion returned - now I could explore a whole range of areas that reflected me as a person.

My need for integration was paramount. Griggs (1996, p 63) has expressed this need in her own research in the following way:

> In essence, this integration has been about bringing together my spiritual understandings and therefore my deeply personal life, to merge with and help make sense of my professional work and related activities..... There was very often a deep yearning for an explanation of the world which appealed to my whole brain, whole being. I wanted a philosophical view of life which would satisfy both the rational, ‘left-brain’ logical side of my brain as well as the metaphysical, spiritual part of me.

Such integration is essential if we are to develop more successful world views and bring about positive change. We must “draw all these levels together - the personal, the social and the spiritual - into one coherent whole” (Zohar, 1990, p 215).

⁹ Conversation with Robert Woog, Acting Head of School, Social Ecology, University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury, recorded in Diary 22.3.95.

M Sturon 1999  *A Personal Perspective on Organisations*
When meeting with Robert Woog, we re-examined the main areas of my research and the need for integrating the invisible and unspoken in organisations. This process identified my main themes of exploration, which were:

1. my dream;
2. philosophy;
3. spirituality;
4. bringing the whole person to work;
5. combining creativity and practicality;
6. linking family and personal learning to organisational learning.

I would use these themes to become more aware of myself, which was a crucial aspect of my research. "The more we are aware of our own thoughts, the more authentically we can listen to ourselves - and the more open we can be to nature, and to new perspectives of reality" (Shepherd, 1993, p 104). Through such an increased awareness of myself, I hoped to become more aware of my organisational life.

I describe below the initial questions associated with each of these main themes, which over time, flowed, linked and merged. With hindsight, I am able to perceive that the initial questions were sometimes superficial and naive. At the end of my research, my views had broadened and matured and I believe that I established a more realistic and integrated view of organisations and my experiences within them.

**Theme 1: My Dream**

As I continued to explore my ideas with others, I came to realise that what I actually have is a dream about how organisations could be.

_I dream of how things can be_
_Of ways we all could be_

_I see us caring, extending ourselves_
_Soaring above and reaching for our ideals_
Most people didn’t seem to share my dream. I knew that I had to learn to live with what I perceived as the reality within organisations:

- tasks before relationships and learning;
- power and ego games before decisions for the good of others;
- doing before being;
- planning before values identification;
- focusing on ‘what is’ and not on ‘what could be’.

I am sometimes perceived as ‘thinking differently’ or being ‘too idealistic’. But does this mean I am out of touch with reality? What is reality? Whyte (1994, p 149) says “too much innocence and we are sensed as ‘dangerous idealists’, too much experience and we may sabotage everything we touch with a practiced cynicism”; May (1983) believes that our subjective realities can be quite different, depending on our experiences; and Maturana and Varela (1987) say that we may not be able to see the reality beyond what we experience. But does this mean that to be an effectively functioning and contributing member of a large bureaucratic organisation, I needed to put aside my dream? What are other peoples dreams about organisations - are they nightmares or inspirational?

Theme 2: Philosophy

What are some of the beliefs or principles underlying our knowledge base and ways of being in organisations? What are the platforms beneath much of what we know and do in organisations? Why can’t organisations use their collective wisdom and develop ways of tapping into this? Perhaps some of these ‘deeper’ issues will always remain a mystery - it’s the way of the universe. I wonder why? To have it any other way may not be possible. We know that we must choose change, growth and development for it to occur. Why and how may always remain a mystery. Is this why we ask so many questions and have so few answers?
Theme 3: Spirituality

I’ve been pursuing my own path of spiritual development over a number of years - it’s one of the most important things in my life. If it’s not easy for me as an individual to ‘be spiritual’ or to understand spirituality, what would spirituality mean to individuals within an organisation and to the organisation as a whole?

Theme 4: Bringing the Whole Person to Work

What is the ‘whole’ self and how do I bring it to work? How do I identify my stance in an organisation? What impact does this have on an organisation? How much of a link is there between the ‘real’ person and the organisation? How do I align the two? What would it look like if I brought my whole self to the organisation?

Theme 5: Combining Creativity and Practicality

This seems to be an either/or choice in large organisations, with creativity and practicality not sitting happily side by side. Is this about two paradigms working together? The operational, objective, technical, problem solving paradigm with the systemic, subjective, creative and intuitive paradigm? How do we learn from our internal creative intuitive world? Why do people clash so badly in organisations?

Theme 6: Linking Family and Personal Learning to Organisational Learning

My greatest learning has come from my family and personal situations. Yet organisations keep divorcing family and personal learning from informing improvements in the work environment. Why? How can we link the two together?

Seek no status, work in quiet ways
Do a job well
Have time for both home and work
Decrease stress
Be more compassionate and understanding of others
See the different levels of consciousness.

M Starcon 1999  A Personal Perspective on Organisations
FURTHER CONNECTIONS AND LINKAGES NEEDED TO BE MADE

These themes represent what's closest to my heart. But I still couldn't make sense of organisations. I needed to delve still further. I began to examine my projects at work. What impact were they having on me and my understanding of organisational issues?

Impact of Projects at Work

During the time that I was researching, my work projects tended to centre around the professional development of teams, the development of project management and leadership skills and the implementation of cultural change and work based learning strategies\textsuperscript{10}. I've worked on national as well as state-wide staff and management development projects within the vocational education and training (VET) sector and have been involved in consultancies external to the VET sector. I've developed a particular interest in group learning and facilitation processes. For me the concept of learning is synonymous with the concept of change - learning creates change, change creates learning.

Specific projects that I have worked on, through which I did much of my learning, include the following.


2. Being a member of a NSW case study team for the development of a national product, META (Management Enhancement Team Approach), which is part of the National Management Development Scheme for the VET sector.

\textsuperscript{10} "Work based learning can be defined as linking employee learning to their work role and ... having three interrelated components, ... viza: structuring learning in the workplace; providing ... on-the-job training/learning opportunities; and ... providing relevant off-the-job learning opportunities" (Levy, 1987 in Carter and Gribble, 1991, p 17).

M Staron 1999 A Personal Perspective on Organisations
3. Working as a consultant to a range of organisations, for example, to facilitate restructuring processes.

4. Being a mentor to project managers, for example, who are designing large-scale management development strategies.

5. Being a manager in a division of 40 staff, helping to create shifts from hierarchical staffing structures to project management teams; and changing the culture from training to facilitation and work based learning.

6. Facilitating many groups, for example, to identify their vision and goals; to develop models for new organisational structures; to establish new relationships between merging groups; to develop strategic and business plans; to question mind sets about planning processes.

7. Preparing papers, for example, “National Training Reform Agenda: Management Development Through Work-Based Learning” (Duignan & Staron, 1995); “Beyond the ‘Ah ha’: Intuitive Facilitation” (Larri and Staron, 1999); “Matching Research Methods to Organisational Experiences” (Staron, 1999).

8. Secondments to special projects, for example, to develop training strategies to promote a marketing culture; to develop communication strategies for enterprise bargaining.

9. Setting up a new unit to provide an advisory, consultancy and project management service in professional development.

10. Being a member of cross functional teams in organisations, for example to coordinate feedback on staff response to new microstructures; to develop a vision and strategy for organisational learning and development; to introduce new programs such as the national Graduate Certificate in Training (Action Learning).

Projects such as these gave me an opportunity to observe organisational processes and operations across many levels and functions. The word ‘learning’ was being brandished
everywhere. I noticed with dismay that it was simply replacing the word ‘training’\textsuperscript{11}, while little else changed. Most people within organisations still wanted skills training - for today and for current tasks. As one manager said to me ‘I just want the truck to come around the corner and off-load all the skills that I need’. For most, linking learning to work practices through work based learning strategies, seemed just too hard and too time consuming. The focus remained on planned and formal learning/training.

\begin{center}
\textit{I sit in a workshop, bored}

\textit{I wonder why am I here?}
\textit{Sometimes I’m being told what I already know}
\textit{Sometimes I don’t want to know, what I don’t know,}

\textit{But I’m not being told about what I really want to know}
\textit{I need to get out}
\textit{How?}

\textit{Frustration enfolds me}
\textit{He looks gleeful at our confusion}
\textit{The power of information withheld,}

\textit{Why can’t I learn in a way that matches my needs?}
\textit{Why do we all sit in one room}
\textit{As if we are all the same}

\textit{Same needs, same learning styles}
\textit{Same levels of understanding}
\textit{Same levels of interest}

\textit{Am I the only one feeling like this?}
\textit{Surely not!}
\textit{Will I stay the whole day?}
\end{center}

Where was there room for unplanned learning, which I believed was the most critical form of learning. I found Mezirow’s (in Marsick, 1987, pp 16-17) differentiation of three domains of learning extremely helpful:

\textsuperscript{11} ‘Training’ usually refers to short-term activities that emphasize practical skills immediately applicable to the job” (Marsick, 1987, p 3).
• *Instrumental* learning refers to task-oriented problem solving .... [It is] what commonly takes place when people learn to do their job better and is thus frequently the focus of technical learning.

• *Dialogic* learning is directed at interpretive consensual norms. This kind of learning takes place in work settings when people learn about the culture of the organization or when they interpret policies, procedures, goals and objectives.

• *Self-reflective* learning is directed at personal change. Its emphasis .... is critical reflection about oneself as a member of large social units in order to ask fundamental questions about one’s identify.

It was very clear to me that the organisations I worked with were generally focusing on one level only - instrumental learning, which demanded incremental improvement through planned, objective and practical processes. But what about quantum leaps? I observed that practices which promoted incremental improvement seemed to stifle quantum leaps. We were often stopped from ‘leaping’ intuitively and had to participate in processes that created change and improvements through planned step-by-step strategies. Where was the place for subjectivity and intuitive knowing as a model of change, where “small starts, surprises, unseen connections, quantum leaps - matches our experience more closely than our favored models of incremental change”. (Wheatley, 1994, p 43)

I was captured by Stephenson’s (1995, pp 1 - 2) definition of ‘capability’, which seemed to make room for many levels of learning and knowing.

Capability is ..... an all-round human quality, an integration of knowledge, skills and personal qualities used effectively and appropriately in response to varied, familiar and unfamiliar circumstances.

Capability does not easily lend itself to detailed definition. It is easier to recognize it than to measure it with any precision. .......Capability depends much more on our confidence that we can effectively use and develop our skills in complex and changing circumstances than on our mere possession of those skills.

Capable people have confidence in their ability to:
• take effective and appropriate action
• explain what they are about
• live and work effectively with others and
• continue to learn from their experiences
as individuals and in association with others, in a diverse and changing society.

How could our work environments nurture the development of capability, particularly when “many systems and work environments possess an environment that is, at best, lukewarm and,
at worst, hostile to growth, development and learning” (Duignan & Staron, 1995, p 4). I was perplexed by the way people seemed to create obstacles within themselves to the way organisations could be. Perhaps the resistance was about fear of change. As described by Cairnes (1994, p 57):

If you bring successful change into part of the system over which you have control you will automatically trigger change in other parts of the system, and the more powerful and successful your change the more likely you are to create a hostile response from those who are frightened of evolving.

As I explored these issues in my Diary, analysing and reflecting on my experiences as a participant/observer in organisations, some recurring themes began to emerge. I wanted to explore these in depth as I intuitively felt that they were important and often went unobserved or consequently untheorised.

❖ The continuing tension between processes, relationships, tasks and outcomes.
❖ The impact of invisible and unspoken issues such as paradoxes, diversity, spirituality, personalities, ego, power and manipulation.
❖ The irritation with uncertainty and the continual search for solutions. This “desire for certainty, closure, stability is felt today in many areas of social and political life” (Tacey, 1995, p 119).
❖ The wide range of needs that impact on how we work within organisations, such as needing to be liked, needing to know, needing to fill in the void when we lack information.
❖ The contradiction and mystery between what we do and what we know we should do.
❖ The need for meaningful dialogue and facilitation of learning and group processes, as one way of working our way to new levels of consciousness and interdependence.

Many of the changes taking place within organisations were not creating something ‘better’. I was becoming very frustrated about the standards that I had to conform to and the ever increasing number of controls being implemented.
Values and Ethics

I was also observing that the issue of values and ethics was usually ignored by individuals or groups within organisations. At best, it translated into a list that everyone was supposed to abide by. However, people seemed to put aside their values, almost unconsciously, in order to maintain their existing practices within organisations. It’s almost as if people were saying to themselves “I know what I value, but I’ll do it this other way”.

I believe values, group processes and relationships are the most crucial things within an organisation - yet get the least attention. As Wheatley (1994) says, organisational power is in the relationships, not tasks, function or hierarchies. Organisations need to place being before doing. But what would this involve?

This was an area that I was slowly starting to learn something about - but saw huge gaps between theory and practice and didn’t know how to bring the two together.

What Method Could I Use To Capture All This?

I needed a method that allowed me to explore all of the above areas. I discussed my concerns with Robert Woog\textsuperscript{12} and he suggested that I use a ‘holonocentric’ methodology and place at the centre the issue of ‘Thinking, Doing, Being Organisations’. Around this issue, I could follow a number of paths and explore the themes, projects at work, values and ethics and look for linkages and connections that would emerge (see Figure 2).

In discussing this with my research supervisor Judy Pinn\textsuperscript{13}, we agreed that this methodology would enable me to start coming to grips with my research because it would:

\begin{itemize}
  \item link my thinking and dream to my practice at work;
  \item involve others in the process that I would go through and I would learn from the experience;
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{12} Conversation with Robert Woog, recorded in Diary 12.4.95.
\textsuperscript{13} Conversation with Judy Pinn, recorded in Diary 14.4.95 (see Appendix 1 for extract from Diary).
keep the connection between my thinking, feeling, work and family;
write about the known, but continue my search for the unknown and unnamable;
stay with the fuzziness and mess and record what it's like;
consider whether the small part I record of organisations, reflects the whole.

This last point seemed critical to my research. I wanted to understand the whole system and how I fitted into it. Could the experiences that I have in organisations, also reflect the whole picture? I was hoping that this was the case. However, Ulrich (1994, p 21) suggests that the systems idea as we understand it does not presuppose that we can know 'the whole system,' but only that we can undertake a critical effort to reflect on the inevitable lack of comprehensiveness in our understanding of and design for systems.

Perhaps realistically, my research will result in a limited understanding of organisations around the areas that I chose to research.

Figure 2: Holonocentric Methodology
CONFUSION AND LACK OF CONGRUENCE

I thought I was now becoming clearer about how I was going to approach my research. I was exploring my feelings and views about my dream, philosophies and passion about learning. At the same time I was firmly planted in the world of work, immersed in projects, deadlines and administration. However, the lack of congruence between my private inner world and work world started to bother me. My confusion became deeper and deeper. No sooner did I think the real issue was learning, when new experiences or insights would lead me to say it’s capability, or values, or doing/being that I must dedicate myself to. Adding to my confusion was my reading - there were so many authoritative and inspirational sources on organisations, change, spirituality and learning, why would I try to say anything at all? I thought the only way out of my confusion would be to select one topic to research. But I still couldn’t decide which topic.

I think of Judy Pinn, who sat with me during my uncertainty and confusion. Who believed in what I was doing and always gave me the courage to continue.

I arrived with such confusion
I must be the only one to have ever felt like this!
This state is permanent
I will never be sure again
Who am I to add to the body of knowledge?
But one meets a guiding light
Understanding
Sure of the process
Have faith
Stay with it
It’s all part of the process
And something exciting will come out of it.

The lack of congruence I was feeling was showing up in my writing. When I wrote about my thoughts, feelings and views, I wrote quite differently to when I wrote about my work.
projects. My ideals were getting in the way - I wanted to see a world that reflected these ideals, not the world that I actually had to work in. Perhaps I was really a hypocrite, since Krishnamurti (in Lutyens, 1954, p 209) suggests that idealists are only copying a person or an idea and are “always trying to become what he is not, instead of being and understanding what he is”. What method would help me cope with this?

What Method Would Help Me Now?

As I again pondered over this dilemma with Robert Woog 14, we reviewed a range of research methods by talking though my needs and desires, examining my writing to date and the mapping that I had done of my research issues. This mapping was in the form of a ‘spider’s web’ on a large sheet of paper and attempted to create some logic and linkages in my research. I don’t believe that it did this. I was unable to embed linearity into my research – of either my subject of inquiry, my method or my data to date. After much deliberation and almost giving up, we chose diary writing as the most appropriate method for me. I would concentrate on a diary recording my critical reflections as they occurred. I would not separate out my reflection on reading from my reflection on a project or incident, or have separate sections for different topics. My aim was to use a diary to analyse, reflect and gain insights into things as they happened in the belief that all things are connected and gradually, the linkages would emerge.

Supported by the heuristics approach that I was taking, we worked out that at this stage my questions, contradictions and interests centred around the following:

- Organisations can have internal discord when they set noble ideals, but choose mediocre strategies and methods, and also have external discord, when they receive external feedback about functions inappropriate to them.
- Is there room for ideals and spirituality in organisational life? Can an organisation have a soul?
- How do I, with my values and beliefs, stay a member of an organisation that contradicts those values and beliefs?

14 Conversation with Robert Woog, recorded in Diary 22.4.95 (see Appendix 2 for extract from Diary).
What is the illusion of a learning organisation? Organisations are projected as becoming higher and more noble in their operations, yet actual improvements are only slightly better than before.

Organisational functions and incidents can be observed and interpreted in terms of organisational practice. This view will lead me to a better understanding of the spirit of organisational practice and function and this kind of learning is within small units, and not a whole-of-organisation study. Therefore, I need to reflect and write about observations, questions, strategies and improvements.

This then placed me and not an instrument, at the centre of my research (see Figure 3). From this point of view, I would examine three dimensions:

1. applied/organisation based projects that I am working on;
2. propositional knowledge from my reading;
3. consciously develop my own thoughts and practices.

Positioning myself at the centre of my research would influence my interpretation and description of myself, of others and of my external worlds. Krieger (1991) supports the validity of such a position and believes that there is a need for self-expression and the articulation of an inner sense of individual experience.

There is no right balance between self and other in a study. There are simply different ways of expressing, or using, self. .... It is important to reveal not only more of the outer world on which we focus our gaze, but more about the inner worlds in which we assemble what we choose to say. (Krieger, 1991, p 6)

From this process, I believed that I would be able to create a better understanding of all three dimensions and identify propositions for improvements in one or all three areas. One proposition that I was commencing with was that personal learning will be a model for organisational learning.
Figure 3: Placing Myself in the Centre of My Research

When I went home from the meeting with Robert Woog, I commenced the Diary on which my thesis is based. What I wrote in the Diary is different to that of “most researchers ... [whose] work is about revealing nature rather than being personally revealed”. (Shepherd, 1993, p 119)

The Diary contains my intimate thoughts, experiences, reflections and insights as a participant/observer in organisations. My views were often subjective and emotional, and centered in the self, as I tried to find my ‘voice’. Throughout the whole process, the invisible and unspoken emerged, as well as the need to create space for continual movement, instead of grasping for certainty and linearity. I questioned assumptions, redefined organisations and developed principles to guide my practice in organisations.

I jumped into the deep end of the pool
To see if I could swim or not
And sometimes I found people to hold hands with
And other times I didn’t.
CHAPTER 3  SELF AS CENTRE:

Freeing Ourselves to Learn

My Diary
What is my research really about?
Using systemic ideas to explore organisational learning
The need for space to simply learn and grow
Few forums for learning
Was it to be individual or organisational learning?
Being comes before doing
MY DIARY

I kept a Diary for nearly two years (from April 1995 to December 1996) and it provides the basic data for my thesis. I’m overwhelmed at the thought of how to present what’s in the Diary. I look at the information and it jumps all over the place - from comments on my reading, to observations and experiences at work, to reflections on my family, to development of concepts and models and sometimes all these at any one time. There is no neat, logical order. As Bateson (1972, p 438) said, “we do not live in the sort of universe in which simple lineal control is possible. Life is not like that”.

I can’t seem to work out how to approach this issue. I’m tempted to plan and categorise my work, but am still resisting it, as it would not be congruent with how, as a practitioner and researcher, I conducted my research. I had quite a learning journey and at times, my thinking changed as I progressed through my research. It wouldn’t make sense to lump all the like bits together. For example, at one point I was convinced that I needed to focus on human nature, but by the end of my research, that was no longer the dominant issue for me, as I had a far greater acceptance that we are what we are and it’s not always knowable.

There are three main options for me.

1. To plan and classify my work and present like-information together within each of these classifications. For example, I could select major issues that occur throughout the diary such as complexity and uncertainty, restructuring and change, behaviour and reactions within organisations and reorganise my work into these sections.
2. To present my thesis in the form of a Diary, dating each section and presenting the information in chronological order.
3. To examine each section in the diary as I come to it, work out what the main issue was that I had to grapple with at the time and focus my writing around that. A similar, but slightly different option to 2 above, in that my research will not be presented in a strictly chronological order.
I’ve selected option 3 as the most meaningful approach for me to take, because it will allow me to present my work as it occurred and when appropriate, group like-material together. Option 3 will also help me to:

- make sense of why I focused on certain issues at particular points in time;
- more genuinely reflect the research and learning process as it actually occurred - not in planned ways, but through unplanned processes, with unexpected surprises and insights along the way;
- show the interconnectedness of things that we do - for example, I may list the main issues that I want to examine, but then in reality my reading, thoughts and experiences take me in many directions, not occurring in any logical order, but all combining to help me along my search for greater understanding;
- work with the paradox that we need both planned and unplanned processes.

**WHAT IS MY RESEARCH REALLY ABOUT?**

It’s my personal journey of exploration.

It started out by me selecting what I thought was a key topic (i.e. paradigms) and some key questions (about paradigms) to which I would seek answers, in the belief that this would provide ways to help us function more healthily and productively within organisations. It ended with me believing that there is no single key topic and no key solution. Perhaps some insights, some ideas, some shared experiences, some models, but no real answers.

I focused on the invisible and unspoken in organisations and observed that most people are trying to change organisational culture without doing it with their hearts and feelings. And as they focus on changing others, they usually ignore the need to change themselves. Why this is so is not easy to uncover. The answers keep changing as my awareness levels increase, as “...the observed patterns among events are always subject to change or reinterpretation. Thus, there are no ultimate explanations in science…” (Singleton and Straits, 1999, p 37)

Consequently my research became a search - through my heart, soul and intellect for greater understanding and awareness. The process and search is what became important and it revolved around what was most important to me in my life - my family, my work and my own
development and growth. It was a search for how to create something ‘better’ within organisations, a search that simply continues.

**USING SYSTEMIC IDEAS TO EXPLORE ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING**

I began researching at a point in time when many of us were working in known and familiar ways, but seeing that current and future changes required us to think and act differently. When grappling with major work issues, applying systemic ideas was becoming a prime solution to ‘getting it right’. We tried to understand how “systems are integrated wholes whose properties cannot be reduced to those of smaller units” and that we needed to “look at the world in terms of relationships and integration” (Capra, 1983, p 286). There was an unspoken expectation throughout many organisations that managers had, or would, read Senge’s (1992) book *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organisation*. There aren’t many ‘bibles’ within some organisations, but this was one of them. We now had to become ‘The Learning Organisation’.

A Learning Organisation is .... where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free and where people are continually learning how to learn together. (Senge, 1992, p 3)

As organisational practitioners, many of us were making reference to these kinds of systemic ideas as a way of explaining and improving organisational behaviour. We believed that we needed to firstly, understand the multidimensional, interconnected and complex nature of organisations. Secondly, we needed to understand the elements of dynamics and change, so that both learning and organisational learning processes were creating change and business success (though increased productivity).

I turned to Bawden’s (1994) paper on *Systemic Development: A Learning Approach to Change*. Bawden (1994) acknowledges both the complex nature of organisations and the need for learning. He suggests that a key competency for the future is systemic thinking and practice. I was inspired by his writing and believed that we needed such global and cross-functional views. His advice is to be inclusive and encouraging of multiple paradigms in the

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15 Review of Bawden’s (1994) paper and related concepts, recorded in Diary 22.4.95 (see Appendix 3 for extract from Diary).
workplace and that when one thinks systemically, then one is able to work in all paradigms and to apply the multiplicity of paradigms to different situations.

I thought that we had finally got it right! But had we? We had new words, but I was still struggling to find within organisations, the practices and quantum leaps that were needed to create the learning organisation. From my own observations and practice, I could only find a few who could work across a number of paradigms. I also noticed that others felt distinctly uncomfortable with these people. Despite trying to learn and practice systemic thinking, it seems to me that it remains a mystery for most of us within organisations. It’s not easy for people to learn these skills - we train, read, try hard, but often little seems to change.

As organisational practitioners and researchers, this poses a huge challenge for us. If we can’t seem to understand the whole range of paradigms and complexity in organisations, what could we do at an applied level? My suggestion is that it would be appropriate to have a combination of:

1. people who can think systemically, are able to exert influence within the organisation and help others to understand the community and organisation-wide effect of decisions before they are implemented;
2. others very skilled at working in their own paradigm, but understanding and accepting that all paradigms need to co-exist within organisations; and
3. effective networks established across all paradigms.

Although I started with an exploration of systemic concepts (which I return to explore in Chapter 4), it led me very rapidly to exploring learning, because of the organisational focus on learning as a way of creating systems change.

Learning can be defined in a variety of ways:

Learning is the way in which individuals or groups acquire, interpret, reorganize, change or assimilate a related cluster of information, skills and feeling. It is also primary the way in which people construct meaning in their personal and shared organizational lives. (Marsick, 1987, p 4)

Learning encompasses two meanings: (1) the acquisition of skill or know-how, which implies the physical ability to produce some action, and (2) the acquisition of know-
why, which implies the ability to articulate a conceptual understanding of an experience. Learning can thus be defined as increasing one’s capacity to take effective action. (Kim, 1993, p 37)

A common thread in these and many other definitions (for example, Kolb, 1984, Argyris and Schon, 1990) is that learning occurs in action, creates meaning for those involved and results in change and vice versa.

I turned to explore in depth Bateson’s (1972, pp 283 - 308) concept of learning. He equates learning with change and identifies four levels of learning, which are hierarchical and based on the types of errors to be corrected in each level. As a base, Bateson (1972) identifies Zero Learning, which is not corrected by trial and error. As I understand it, the hierarchy then commences with Learning I, where the context is repeatable and by trial and error, the learner learns to repeat the same action; i.e., different choices are made within a set of alternatives. For example, we can identify a play by the curtains, seating arrangements, etc. and we know we can laugh at situations that we may not ordinarily laugh at. This level of learning regularly involves a stimulus, response or reinforcement, for example, when animals learn to press a bell to obtain food. In the next level of learning, Learning II, there is a transfer of learning to different contexts and this level may be described as learning to learn. There may be a change in context, but the learner is able to transfer learning to that context and ‘problem solve’. Learning occurs through trial and error by changing the set of alternatives from which choices are made. Bateson (1972) suggests that this level of learning is as far as most humans progress in their learning. Learning is difficult and rare at the next level, Learning III, where there is a profound reorganisation of character, for example in religious conversion or a complete shift in paradigm. Even though Bateson (1972) says that it may not be possible to describe this level of learning with language, he chooses to describes it as a change in the system of sets of alternatives, from which a choice is made.

The following is a simplified version of an example given by Bateson (1972) to describe the progression of learning. Level 1 learning occurs when a porpoise learns to obtain fish from a trainer through repeating a particular action. This learning progresses to level II when the porpoise begins to understand his/her relationship with the trainer. The porpoise moves into level III learning when it starts to learn about contradictions in level II learning. The porpoise may, for instance, learn to eat when it is hungry instead of being dependent on the trainer. Bateson (1972) believes that learning is strongly influenced by genetics and that many of us
may not be ‘programmed’ for level III learning. He also describes situations in which people cannot cope with level III learning and if they attempt to do so, may develop pathological reactions.

Perhaps organisations now require more of level II and level III learning than previously required, to cope with the fast pace of changing technologies, globalisation and emerging socio-economic and ecological problems. The development of capable people in organisations, will require learning at these levels. The difficulty of engaging with level II and level III learning may be one significant reason why training is not transferred to the workplace, or why so many people appear to not want to learn. From another point of view, Barnett (1994) questions the existence of any kind of transferable skills, suggesting that if it does exist, then it is that of metacritique. Metacritique consists of continual self-surveillance with nothing taken for granted or on trust, so that there is personal ownership of one’s experiences and “challenge, resilience, daring, risk and maturity all come into play” (Barnett, 1994, p 182).

Our organisational systems and training strategies appear to be more suited to level I learning, i.e., easily transferred providing the contexts are similar in both the training and work situations. There seems to be little recognition that different ‘levels’ of learning exist. However, paradoxically, there is an assumption within organisations that needs to be questioned: that through planned and formal processes, individuals will learn at all levels of learning. We unfortunately assume that we learn and know, and then change and do. However, I’m convinced that many people learn a lot intellectually, but have great difficulty in implementing it in practice. We are good at believing and rationalising that our practice matches our intellectual knowledge and vice versa.

**THE NEED FOR SPACE TO SIMPLY LEARN AND GROW**

While some people focus on systemic concepts and the development of organisational learning, the main focus is usually on how to develop basic skills. I began to tire of the many forums pushing competencies as the solution to required skill levels within Australia, as I find the approach very narrow. The fact that there is a set standard and set list of skills, knowledge and attributes for everyone at each level within organisations disturbs me. And when the debate focuses on metaskills, the solution is to include those skills in competency lists. So
now the lists include intuitive thinking, strategic thinking, team skills, group processes and systemic thinking. However, metaskills are more than just skills and knowledge and cannot be easily taught or measured. I’m sure that there is no ‘standard’ in regard to metaskills. As identified by Mindell (1992), they are not what we do, but the way we do it, i.e., the attitude with which we work with others. I’m sure that this is far more critical to organisations than primarily focusing on the skills or methods we use. To discover and develop metaskills requires “a mixture of talent, inner development, and outer role models” (Mindell, 1992, p 49).

I couldn’t clearly articulate why I was so disturbed. I just knew the current approach to development through competencies couldn’t work. There was no place in the organisation for ‘just knowing’, especially through just a deep gut reaction, and there was little place for ‘bucking the system’.

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\begin{align*}
\text{We may not be doing the right thing,} \\
\text{So let's set some indicators for everyone} \\
\text{And stick to them!}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{We may not be doing things in the right way,} \\
\text{So let's set some performance measures for everyone} \\
\text{And stick to them!}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{We may not be using the right skills,} \\
\text{So let's set some competency levels for everyone} \\
\text{And stick to them!}
\end{align*}
\]

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\begin{align*}
\text{We may not know what we are doing,} \\
\text{So let's set some plans for everyone} \\
\text{And stick to them!}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Do we all have to be the same?} \\
\text{Reach the same standards?} \\
\text{Do things in the same way?}
\end{align*}
\]

However, which ever way we approach learning, the individual remains the “key medium through which change occurs” (Cairnes, 1994, p 79). In examining individual learning, Maturana and Varela (1987) describe a person’s knowing as doing, and doing as knowing. They say that “all knowing is an action by the knower, that is, that all knowing depends on the structure of the knower” (Maturana & Varela, 1987, p 34). Similarly, Schon (1990, p 25)
describes our learning processes as “knowing-in-action”, which we demonstrate by spontaneous actions without thinking, for example, when riding a bicycle or deciphering a balance sheet. Often the more skilled and ‘natural’ we are at the actions we take, the harder we find it to verbally describe the judgments and calculations required to carry out these action. If we do try, we usually give inaccurate descriptions. This is because there are “large unconscious components in the performance” as well as conscious levels of skill (Bateson, 1972, p 137). Bateson (1972) argues that the more skilled we are, the more we develop the skill as a habit and the more we rely on our unconscious knowledge of how to perform the skill. If this is so, how can we measure it? And if we assume that skill development is part of personal development, Illich (1971, p 45) suggests that “personal growth is not a measurable entity. It is growth in disciplined dissidence, which cannot be measured against any rod, or any curriculum, nor compared to someone else’s achievement”.

In organisations, every day we make judgments based on knowing-in-action. But we are also required to increasingly provide plans, explanations and justification as to why we take these actions and this can’t help but distort to some extent the original actions. “For knowing-in-action is dynamic, and ‘facts,’ ‘procedures,’ ‘rules,’ and ‘theories,’ are static” (Schon, 1990, p 25).

It’s just as hard for many, Schon believes (1990), to describe their process of reflection-in-action, as it is to describe their process of knowing-in-action, i.e., it is difficult to reflect on our reflection-in-action and to provide an accurate verbal description - let alone, to then reflect on that description. However, we do need to critically reflect as it does impact on our future actions, to one extent or another. We do tend to do things differently, after we have thought about how we did those things in the past.

Learning through knowing and reflection-in-action means that we need to have a broader concept than competency development, which depends on standards, measurement and description of competencies and an assumption that we are able to accurately do this. I would question this assumption and whether it is a worthwhile use of time even attempting to do so. I found Stephenson’s (1995) concept and definition of ‘capability’ more representative of the learning needed within organisations, than the narrower definitions of competency with

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16 For definition of ‘capability’, refer to page 43.

M Storan 1999  A Personal Perspective on Organisations
their focus on skills training and development. As implemented in Australia, competence involves the “observable demonstration of current abilities which show an adequate or sufficient level of functional knowledge and skill in the area being examined” (Cairnes, 1997a, p 7). However, in contrast to this, capability is an all-round human quality that is easier to recognise than measure; which is the confidence in our ability to use and develop our knowledge, skills and personal qualities in both familiar and unfamiliar circumstances; and which enables us to live and work effectively with others and continue to learn from our experiences (Stephenson, 1995). For me, it was such a refreshing change to work with this concept and philosophy, instead of just the usual specific lists of standards and skills. Barnett (1994, p 178) takes it further and passionately argues that to reduce human action to a constellation of terms such as ‘performance’, ‘competence’, ‘doing’ and ‘skill’ is not just to resort to a hopelessly crude language with which to describe serious human endeavours. In the end, it is to obliterate the humanness in human action. It is to deprive human being of human being.

Illich (1971) describes how we need both the development of skills and the development of inventive and creative behaviour. The former may not, and the latter certainly will not, be developed through the current interpretation of competencies and reliance on instruction and training. What we need is learning, with opportunities for people to “meet around a problem chosen and defined by their own initiative. Creative, exploratory learning requires peers currently puzzled about the same terms or problems” (Illich, 1971, p 26). Within organisations, most effort is expended on the opposite: pre-structured programs for targeted groups. I don’t think many organisations have developed open forums for learning, where individuals self-select the issues and solutions they want to work on, where they will work on them and with whom. There is little freedom for people to ‘advertise’ the issues they wish or need to learn about and little overall encouragement for people to consciously put aside regular time for learning. Unfortunately, as Illich (1971, p 51) says, school has “taught us the need to be taught”. We need to make both our unplanned, as well as our planned learning more effective.

There is a need to capture a view of human being beyond operations and technique, and beyond intellectual paradigms and disciplinary competence. Consequently, Barnett (1994, p 179) looks to a total world experience of human beings, which he describes as “life-world becoming” (acknowledging that that the term ‘life-world’ was originally coined by Jurgen
Habermas). He believes that this move to life-world becoming requires a varied and broad capability which includes: reflective knowing; situations which are always open-ended; a focus on dialogue; transferability (if it exists); learning at a metalearning level; evaluation which involves consensus; a value orientation which focuses on the ‘common good’; boundary conditions because capability for the life-world has to operate in the world; and critique which aims to improve our understanding of our life-world itself. I think this is a fundamental need within organisations and yet our short term focus, our immediate concerns about globalisation and technology and ‘doing more with less’, actively works against us developing these capabilities.

I agree with Barnett (1994, p 186) when he argues that the capability of life-world becoming will develop “interactive minds engaging with the world and searching collaboratively for wisdom” in a way that is not possible through the development of competencies. Competencies limit both thought and action; reducing learning to competencies is representative of comparatively closed worlds, with an emphasis on conformity. Life-world becoming requires us to articulate our viewpoints and to submit them to our peers for critique through open dialogue. Our environments become learning communities, through which we “more fully become ourselves” (Barnett, 1994, p 193). This will be essential if, as Cairns (1997b, p 2) suggests, “the future organization will be one which has capable learners at the core”.

Much of the debate in research and in our organisations is based on an unquestioned assumption that the object of learning has become the understanding of the system and its processes, and how to apply this to solving organisational problems and thus creating business success (Garrick and Rhodes, 1998). There is a lack of recognition within many organisations, for the need to simply learn and grow and that business success isn’t necessarily an end in itself. Of course, organisations would not be sympathetic to this point of view - of placing greatest value on the learning. There are outcomes to achieve, customer needs to be met, profits to be made, political masters to be kept happy. However, we are all different in our awareness, skills and interests and it is totally unrealistic to set the same standard for all. I believe that as long as we are learning and developing in a positive way that contributes to our own welfare and simultaneously to the welfare of others, our organisations and to society, competency lists are not necessary or should only be a small part of our learning. This is because “most learning happens causally, and even most intentional learning is not the result
of programmed instruction” (Illich, 1971, p 20). The focus needs to be on developing and maintaining work environments that nurture us, promote our learning and develop and support us in looking outwards and globally, as well as inwardly. We need learning opportunities when we are eager and ready to learn. “One of the most critically needed principles for educational reform [is ] the return of the initiative and accountability for learning to the learner or his most immediate tutor” (Illich, 1971 p 24). Through my experience as a participant/observer in organisations, I actually believe that if organisations supported personal development, skills development would occur more meaningfully, efficiently and effectively. Development would become more holistically integrated in relation to the needs of individuals and groups. Without personal development and some change internally, there will be little external change in the way our organisations operate. As described by Krishnamurti (in Lutyens, 1954, p 15) when discussing the need for radical changes in our society, “this transformation of the outer cannot take place without inner revolution”.

We are always searching for something new
Something that will solve our problems

A new model, a new theory and a new way of doing things

But do we renew ourselves?
Or only our theories?

FEW FORUMS FOR LEARNING

So many external changes come and go. No wonder most changes are considered ‘fads’ by staff - they have seen so many models, theories, warnings and proposals. Many of us have lost our ability to distinguish between changes which we do need to respond to, as they ‘won’t go away’ and changes that are just superficial new ways of doing things in the hope that productivity and profit will increase. And many of our leaders “like the ostrich ... have put their head in the sand in the hope that ‘what comes around goes around’, and that both their problems and those people who are supporting new ways of being will just go away” (Cairnes, 1994, p 3).

But do our leaders in organisations really want us to change radically and consequently radically change our organisations? And are they prepared to undergo radical internal change
themselves? Cairnes (1994, p 104) suggests that "there are a large number of business leaders who would prefer to have their businesses fail than go through this level of personal change". Barnett (1994) suggests that the current focus on competence supported by the notion of input-output, keeps us deliberately focused on given situations.

What is prized is not a genuine interpretation of a situation (for that could lead to an unduly challenging world-view) but a reprocessing of presented sense data. Real independence of mind cannot be tolerated. Real minds would be liable to challenge the given definition of competence and outcomes (Barnett, 1994, p 173).

Organisations need to re-consider the resources, tools and techniques, attitudes to learning and the way we structure our development within organisations. We must assume that given a supportive environment, people will be self-motivated to learn (and change). Illich (1971) identifies three purposes of a good educational system: 1) it provides resources to all those who want to learn; 2) it empowers all who want to share what they know with those who want to learn it from them; and 3) it provides an opportunity for all those who want to present an issue to others, with the opportunity to make their challenge known. Such a definition would be very appropriate for learning and development within organisations and would certainly broaden learning beyond competency identification and measurement. Learning would be facilitated, rather than taught. This facilitation would occur through the provision of learning exchanges, which Illich (1971) believes would provide all the resources required for learning. This is because we would: observe things around us and other peoples skills and values; find peers who challenge us to argue, to compete, to cooperate and to understand; and find experienced ‘elders’ to confront and criticise us, but who really care.

So little of the above occurs in organisations. We are too busy surrounding ourselves with like-minds and with reasons for why we need to keep doing things the way we have always done them. We show little respect to those who are experienced and ‘wise’. To construct such environments within organisations would be a real challenge and unfortunately beyond the scope of this research. There are some ‘free’ and innovative pockets within many organisations and current work based learning strategies may be attempting to achieve some of Illich’s (1972) ideals, as they allow individuals or groups to link their learning to their work and their personal needs. For example, I’ve noticed that in major restructures in an organisation, when people don’t know what their jobs will look like, a lot of the face to face
training stops - primarily because it's at the instrumental level\textsuperscript{17}, focusing on roles, functions and training, with little room for learning. In the work based learning and action learning approaches and strategies that I've been involved in for a number of years, I've seen the strategies continue on despite the turmoil in organisations, as the participants can ensure that the learning remains directly relevant to their changing circumstances and needs. However, we are far from creating true organisation-wide learning environments - despite the claim by many. I am a little shocked at what many organisations are calling work based learning - it's often training disguised as learning, with a set curriculum and classroom focus, although there may be a workplace project to be done in the field.

Instead of using the terms 'skill' and 'strategies', Argyris and Schon (1974, p 5) use the terms 'theory of intervention' and 'theory of action', and define theories as "vehicles for explanations, prediction, or control". They believe "learning to put a theory of action into practice and learning a skill are similar processes" (Argyris & Schon, 1974, p 12). They call these operational theories of action, \textit{theories-in-use}, to distinguish them from \textit{espoused theories} "that are used to describe and justify behavior" (p viii). According to Argyris and Schon (1974), it's essential that we understand our theories-in-use, so that we can consciously and critically examine our actions when we perform ineffectively. Therefore, if we develop our understanding of and acquisition of new theories in action, "it is likely that organizations will begin to decrease the movement toward entropy and increase the forces toward learning and health" (Argyris & Schon, 1974, p xi).

It's not surprising that we avoid examining our theories-in-use. If we do so publicly, we have to confront our "defensiveness, the defensiveness of others, and the ineffectiveness of the group" (Argyris & Schon, 1974, p 76). This can raise embarrassment, 'hurt' feelings, anger and negatively impact on relationships at work. However, if we don't check-out our theories-in-use, we are acting on assumptions that may be inaccurate and consequently proceed to reinforce inappropriate existing behaviours (Argyris & Schon, 1974). And these inappropriate behaviours will have to change.

There is no doubt that the rules of the game are changing. As organisations learn to see the world differently, as they grapple with the paradox of sustainable development, as new technology is integrated into the system, and as they acquire a new social

\textsuperscript{17} For definition of instrumental learning, refer to page 43.
conscience, so too are they having to question many fundamental assumptions about the nature of ‘organisation’ and its pertinence for today’s corporations. (Hames, 1994, pp 58 - 59)

And questioning these assumptions involves learning how to learn. Wherever I look, organisations, as well as nations espouse this philosophy, but fall back into developing strategies in the old and known ways, through the development of courses to train people in the required skills and attributes. In organisations, our espoused theories seem to constantly differ from our theories-in-action. Argyris and Schon (1974, p viii) wonder “whether the difficulty in learning new theories of action is related to a disposition to protect the old theories-in-use”.

To develop effective theories of practice, Argyris and Schon (1974, p 157) suggest that they should be based on 6 criteria. I quote these criteria at length, because I believe that they are crucial to learning within organisations, but are rarely applied. They may often be acknowledged as ‘good things to do’, but during times of rapid change and pressure on planning and outputs, they are not seen as ‘real work’.

1. The theory should not be self-sealing. It should permit detection of and response to its own inconsistencies, ineffectiveness, and ultimately to its degree of obsolescence.
2. The theory should make the interaction between client and professional conducive to mutual learning.
3. The theory should enable the professional to seek out, identify, and respond to new kinds of clients.
4. The theory should include a theory of reform of the profession that describes methods of transition from present to desired behavior.
5. The theory should be conducive to creating a professional community that undertakes explicit, public, cumulative learning.
6. The theory should make professional practice increasingly compatible with self-actualization, including engaging one’s needs, values, and abilities in the job and setting realistic yet challenging levels of aspiration to promote growth.

Establishing such criteria will ensure our theories-in-use effectively and directly contribute to our organisational capability. However, while developing our theories of practice, we must also include “diagnosis, testing and accepting personal causality” (Argyris & Schon, 1974, p 158). Diagnosis involves us in using our experience to understand and adequately assess situations; testing involves inquiring into situations, forming commitment and actions on knowledge gained, but also being prepared to question knowledge gained and if necessary,
abandoning the stance already taken. In particular, 'personal causation' is vital, as this requires us to take personal responsibility for what we do. In order to do this, we need to focus on our values and make a commitment to them and form a basis for action. If we don't, we act according to the values of others, or we don't act at all. Values are the things considered worth striving for (Schwarz, 1994) or those things that define and direct our behaviour (Limerick & Cunnington, 1993). Values can also be defined as "the instruments through which we select from more information than we can handle ... the simplified, constructed situations in which we can act" (Argyris & Schon, 1974, p 162). It becomes difficult when we take actions that clash with our values, or our clients demand action that conflicts with our values, or our organisational values conflict with our personal values. Argyris and Schon (1974) believe that it is through personal commitment, that we begin to resolve such difficulties.

In my Diary, I considered these many and varied aspects of learning and change. With my focus on human inquiry, I gained insights into some of the practices that were needed in organisations, particularly the need to open up to, instead of constraining continual movement. Individually and collectively, we can increasingly establish opportunities for ourselves and others to:

- take full responsibility for our own learning, including understanding the difference between our espoused theories and theories-in-use;
- take responsibility for mentoring and helping others learn;
- dialogue, critically reflect on and evaluate our personal and organisational progress;
- use our learning to inform our future actions; and
- in groups, share decision making and achievement of outcomes and consequences.

I have seen very little of any of the above take place in organisations that I have worked in - it is more the exception than the rule.

**WAS IT TO BE INDIVIDUAL OR ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING?**

A tension seems to be developing in organisations between individual and organisational learning. Many organisations believe that they can no longer afford to resource personal and individual learning, but are moving towards team and organisational learning, closely linked
to organisational goals or activities with defined business outcomes. Increasingly, some organisations are focusing only on the development of their 'high fliers'. Despite the increasing focus on 'high fliers' and teams, there is still a vital and essential place for individual learning, for all. But how to combine all these needs? We struggle to find all the answers.

And how do organisations learn? Is it simply a sum of all individual and group learning? Do only individuals learn and the organisational learning occurs through the critical conversations? Or is it more? I don’t actually know. It seems such an intangible, overwhelming concept, especially when working in very large organisations. Being influenced by my projects and reading, I began to define my own concept of organisational capability and learning:

The combination of individual and group knowledge, skills, attributes and practices which allow for differences; which demonstrate abilities in interacting with the environment; and which produce actions that improve critical processes and outcomes. (Diary 25.4.95)

All the conceptual ideas and definitions were exciting to debate and discuss. However, were we becoming any better at actually changing as an organisation or learning our way through change? I can think of one instance when I sensed that great change was coming and it felt like I was under a huge wave that was building up and getting ready to crash down and only a few of us were looking up. Everyone else was 'surfing' on, looking straight ahead, determined to stay with what they did best and believed was best for the organisation - that their expertise and dedication would win the day. We've all witnessed the distress when demands are made for change, when people have to start working in alternate or new ways, or within new paradigms that they don’t agree with.

It seems to me that there are a number of ingredients missing within organisations when we face great change. Instead of a focus on the visible and spoken, i.e., practicality and rationality, we need to blend in the invisible and unspoken, i.e., creativity with practicality, and spirituality with rationality (see figure 4). How would we do this within organisations?
Rationality comes from our thought processes and logical interpretations; spirituality comes from beyond thought and “despite our intellectual dedication to rational and egotistical goals, we unconsciously crave an experience of the nonegoic and the transcendent” (Tacey, 1995, p 179). Practicality involves our day to day activities and problems within organisations and the performance of our defined roles and function. Creativity is difficult to define because it has no specifiable limits, but we can discuss what it means to be uncreative. There are three things: you can be mechanically stuck in repeating certain patterns; you can be destructive rather than creative; and you can be mediocre rather than creative. (Bohm & Edwards, 1991, pp 162 - 163)

Fritz (1989, p 11) defines creativity as “taking action to have something come into being”. But how can creativity occur? Zohar (1990, p 181) suggests that it comes through our choices and values, which cannot occur in isolation and which requires free dialogue “between the self that I am and the world as it is now for me in relation to others”.

As I reflected on these issues in my Diary, I continued to read about organisational change, team development, strategic planning, management development, project planning, leadership, work based learning, organisational learning and specific strategies such as the Australian National Training Framework. I’m amazed that despite our body of ancient and modern knowledge, many of us do not change or change very slowly, despite all the information we have which tries to help us adapt to uncertain and complex environments. Despite great breakthroughs in science and technology, how far have we come as a human race? Kierkegaard (in May, 1983, p 141) suggests that we only learn facts and technical achievements from generation to generation; that we do not learn that which is genuinely
human, such as love. Each generation has similar tasks as those of the generations before it. When asked about progress, Krishnamurti (in Lutyens, 1954, p 215) said:

So there has been progress in the technological sense; but have we progressed in any other direction? Have we stopped wars? Are people more kind, more loving, more generous, more thoughtful, less cruel? You don’t have to say yes or no, but just look at the facts. Scientifically and physically we have made tremendous progress; but inwardly we are at a standstill, are we not?

Most people are trying to change organisational culture without doing it with their hearts and feelings. We need to involve ourselves emotionally and ethically, as well as intellectually. If we ask others to change, we need to also change ourselves. No matter how we theorise about change, in the end it really means changing ourselves, while providing environments and opportunities for others to change too.

The grounded theory that emerged for me, is that we need to

- focus on changing ourselves and on creating learning environments, i.e., environments that provide opportunities for individuals and groups to learn how to learn;
- accept that it’s messy and sometimes unknowable; and
- become conscious about whether we are colluding to retain the paradigm that on the surface, we are trying to escape from.

This will not be easy. I tried to do it myself, by looking at ways that I could change internally and the kind of personal changes I could make to my approach at work. I invariably fell back into my old habit of deciding what others needed to do. It’s the same with most organisational units and divisions, which frequently distribute policy statements identifying new practices and outcomes for others, but rarely demonstrate the changes within their own units or identify how they, themselves will change. Systems such as cascading management planning systems support this ‘change others’ approach.
Change!
We must all change quickly, efficiently and effortlessly
Or our organisations won't survive the pressures
Of globalisation, information and technology

We hear the message continuously
From the media and our leaders
They tell us continuously
How we must change and what we must do

It's for our own good
To increase our wealth
To keep our jobs
Or is it to keep the status quo?

But do they ever talk about how they will change?
What they really think and feel?
We all become so good at telling others what to do
And at blaming others

If I don't change, nothing changes around me
Are we prepared to 'expose' ourselves and be vulnerable?
I see our intellect at work everywhere
But there is so little room for our emotions and spirit

It's always there
But we don't allow it to emerge
We often feel so frustrated and miserable deep down
But has our world really changed, that much?

Most people do not consider the 'whole' person when they bring in change. We think that by changing skills we can change organisations. I would argue that what we really need to change are our own levels of consciousness. We must question models and words, as these are often inaccurate and superficial descriptions compared to reality. Most of them are linear, reductionist frameworks which may create certainty and comfort, but only reflect our perception and desire for how we would like things to be. Paradoxically, despite my views, towards the end of my research I was unable to withstand the need to conceptually portray in two models, the complexity of organisations and factors impacting on individuals. Perhaps I could have used some kind of three dimensional, flowing and moving model, but I didn't, couldn't. For ease of explanation, I discovered that a linear representation best suited my needs. Though the models are probably an illusion of reality, I haven't discovered another
way of presenting the outputs of my research. What really lies beneath such models and words? What are the deeper truths - are we able to comprehend these levels? Perhaps most of us can’t. “The human mind in its ordinary state of consciousness is probably incapable of grasping life’s ultimate mysteries” (Blofeld, 1970, p 56).

Enforced programs for change don’t always seem to work. Organisations need more understanding of how to create natural space for support processes, such as facilitation and mentoring. “Support is one of the most potent tools for those interested in creation” (Cairnes, 1994, p 68). And we need faith, just faith in believing that processes such as these and others are essential for transformation and cannot always be measured to show a return on investment of time and resources. Transformation involves “letting go, trusting in the process of life, believing in yourself enough to commit to a process of self-enrichment and daring to believe in something that doesn’t presently exist” (Cairnes, 1994, p 11). We need to accept that as long as people are growing and learning, that can sometimes be sufficient. Quality is about providing space to do something different in the organisation - leaving it untamed and free. Manipulation within organisations, even if done unconsciously, is so destructive.

In fact, learning is the human activity which least needs manipulation by others. Most learning is not the result of instruction. It is rather the result of unhampered participation in a meaningful setting. (Illich, 1971. p 44)

How can we create these ‘meaningful settings’? The focus may well need to be on developing and practicing just ‘being’. But how do we live in the moment, have no expectation of others, be selfless and act with humility in organisations that are competitive and have predetermined expectations of outcomes and profit or public requirements? It’s such a struggle trying to do this in our own private lives, let alone organisationally.

**BEING COMES BEFORE DOING**

There are many ways of examining the concept of ‘being’. My own interpretation focuses on being in touch with our inner self, aware of our ego, judgments and expectation of others, and the way we relate to others. I think of my family situation of four children - a ‘blended’ family. As adults we ‘plan’ their learning - to cook, wash, be civil to each other at the dinner

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18 Discussion in Research Learning Group, recorded in Diary 6.8.95.

M Staron 1999  **A Personal Perspective on Organisations**
table. They learn reluctantly or otherwise. We make lists of things to do, usually placing them on the refrigerator door! Why are these lists ignored? The same as in organisations when we place our plans in our top drawers, to be forgotten until we have to report on them. However the really exciting developments are the unplanned ones - it happens, we often don’t acknowledge it, but it’s what really makes the difference. It involves relationships more than tasks (though more effective doing of tasks are usually the outcome) and involves the way we are as human beings - our being seems so much more important than our doing. I can live with really efficient ‘doing’ people, but that pales into insignificance if the ‘being’ of everyone is ignored. The group starts malfunctioning. I feel organisations are the same, as they malfunction if we just can’t ‘be’. Krishnamurti (in Lutyens, 1954, p 23) says that “to be is to be related and there is no such thing as living in isolation. It’s the lack of right relationship that brings about conflicts, misery and strife”. Blofeld (1970) identifies beings as consisting of five aggregates: forms, feelings, perceptions, impulses and consciousness. These five aggregates differentiate one being from another. He states that it’s the clustering of these aggregates that often lead to illusions. Our main illusions about our being occur through our craving (and aversion), passion and ignorance. Is this what creates and maintains our illusions within organisations?

These spiritual interpretations of being may be seen by many to be vague and irrelevant to organisations. I feel that May’s (1983) psychotherapeutic interpretation of being adds to my understanding and may be seen by others as more relevant. May (1983) believes that although we live in a time where our knowledge base is continually expanding through technology, such as radio and television, many of us in the Western world appear to have little certainty about our own being. It’s difficult to define ‘being’ and it’s often seen as something irrelevant to science, especially when it can’t be systematically studied or mathematically interpreted. “An odd belief prevails in our culture that a thing or experience is not real if we cannot make it mathematical, and somehow it must be real if we can reduce it to numbers” (May, 1983, p 94). However, being

belongs to a class of realities like ‘love’ and ‘consciousness’ ... which we cannot segmentize or abstract without losing precisely what we set out to study. This does not, however, relieve us from the task of trying to understand and describe them. (May, 1983, p 95)
In defining being, May (1983, p 97) acknowledges being as a verb form which “implies that someone is in the process of being something” (like the acorn becomes the oak); that it’s the potentiality whereby each of us becomes what we truly are. We all share a certain degree of potentiality, but at the same time have our own unique pattern. We understand our being at a different level than we understand our specific characteristics or personality. To understand each other at this level, “one must have at least a readiness to love the other person, broadly speaking, if one is to be able to understand him” (May, 1983, p 93). We can understand each other if we can see what each of us are moving towards. If we view people within organisations as just a resource and input to be directed and controlled, we will not only remain isolated from one another, but we will also distort reality. We will not be able to see each other.

To understand our own being, we need to be conscious of ourselves, responsible for ourselves and understand where we are moving to, including our eventual non-being (i.e., death). Our being does not have an individuality of its own, as we are always part of a greater whole (May, 1983). Philosophically, a consciousness of our being (and non-being) within organisations, would have a profound effect. It would turn around our organisations - from what often feels to be our fear-filled focus on action and doing, to a more balanced and in the long-run, energy-producing focus on our being, as well as our doing. A sense of being will enable us to “regain our sense of community” (May, 1983, p 118).

I think I have suffered within organisations, what May (1983, p 119) describes as “epistemological loneliness”. One aspect of this feeling of loss of world occurs from the need to focus primarily on technical communication, i.e., communication which is impersonal and not bedded in the self. For example, we don’t say we like the play, but we say the play was well written; we don’t say we believe in a project, but we say it meets organisational objectives. A feeling of alienation is another aspect of this loneliness and one that more and more people are experiencing with the increasing casualisation and globalisation of the workforce in the ‘90s.

Underlying the economic, sociological, and psychological aspects of alienation can be found a profound common denominator - namely, the alienation which is the ultimate consequence of four centuries of the outworking of the separation of man as subject from the objective world (May, 1983, pp 119 - 120).
Perhaps this is another reason why I have so strongly focused my research within organisations on the self and my subjective point of view.

There is a continual call within organisations for creativity and imagination (which is often confused with skill development and problem solving). This can only be achieved if we are in touch with our being, as well as our doing. This demands of us an awareness and self consciousness of who we are, what we are really doing and its consequences in our relationship with others, and in the possibilities and potential that lies within us. Are we prepared for such awareness? And what awareness do we have of our place within living systems such as organisations?

I turned to an exploration of systems concepts, as a way of understanding the nature of organisations, especially the invisible and unknown and the need for space and movement.
CHAPTER 4    A REFLECTION ON THE NATURE OF ORGANISATIONS:

Interconnections and Perturbations

Biological metaphors for organisations
Organisations as holons
Systems paradigms
Purpose and consciousness
Dreaming our organisations
BIOLOGICAL METAPHORS FOR ORGANISATIONS

One quiet morning at home, my partner Jonas\textsuperscript{19} said to me, organisations are just like human beings. All parts must function for it to be healthy, committed to learning, developing and living harmoniously and productively within its environment. I began to explore this metaphor.

An organisation is really organ-isation or organ-ism. An organisation gets closest to being humane (human) when it is closest to being organic, i.e., when all parts or all members of an organisation are interdependent\textsuperscript{20}. I thought of the different parts of the body - parts that do the thinking, moving, dreaming, visioning, listening, seeing, supporting, excreting, connecting, absorbing. Immediately I had started with the visible parts. But what of the invisible parts? Feelings, spirit and soul?

I wondered what the parts of the body represented to Hay (1988, pp 153 - 184): legs carry us forward in life; arms represent the capacity and ability to hold the experiences of life; heart represents the centre of love and security; lungs represent the ability to take in life; stomach holds nourishment, digests ideas; bowel represents the release of waste; eyes represent the capacity to see clearly - past, present and future; ears represent the capacity to hear; mouth represents the taking in of new ideas and nourishment; brain represents the computer, the switchboard.

Obviously all these parts are needed within organisations. Perhaps an old fashioned, biological metaphor, but one I still felt was useful. I thought of those who take us in particular directions. Others who interact with the environment and feed information into organisations. Those doing a job and wanting to know what to do and how to do it. The way we can act mindlessly and uncreatively or intuitively and imaginatively; and how we can malfunction and become obese or become too lean in organisations. Messages and directions can be coordinated within organisations or out of sync. Links and shared meaning can be created or

\textsuperscript{19} Conversation with Jonas Zvirblis, recorded in Diary 26.4.95.
\textsuperscript{20} Feedback from Ian Mills, recorded in Diary 21.5.95.

M Staron 1999 A Personal Perspective on Organisations
fragmentation can occur. Our listening, seeing, thinking and speaking parts can be in or out of harmony and balance.

As I reflected on the metaphor of an organisation as a human being, I concluded that organisations need all their parts connected; need all parts to be in both harmony and tension; need a conscience, heart and soul; need to be strongly connected to the external environment; and need many different functions, parts and capabilities.

When we look at all the struggles organisations are going through I wonder what we need to take responsibility for having created? “There is a close relationship between the way we think and the way we act, and ... many organizational problems are embedded in our thinking” (Morgan, 1986, p 335). I knew that I had to broaden the way that I was thinking about organisations. I turned to Maturana and Varela’s (1987) explanation of living systems, another metaphor and process which can be used for a biological interpretation of organisations. I focused on autopoietic organisation, structure and adaptability.21

Maturana and Varela (1987) describe the way groups can be categorised into a class by defining what is common within the group. For living beings, they identify as the common characteristic, the ability to be continually self-producing and call this organization an “autopoietic organization” (p 43). As living systems, our organisations need the capacity to continually self-produce, i.e., they need autopoietic organization. I suspect that many people, in regard to living systems, confuse structures with organisation. Living beings may differ in their structure, but they are alike in their organization. My interpretation of this in terms of a work group is that the organisation indicates the relationships and commonalties that must exist for that group to remain being classed as a ‘work group’. Structures consist of how that work group is put together. For example, in a work group, we can change the structures, but still have the same organisation. If we don’t recognise the difference between organisation and structure, we have difficulty in maintaining our work groups as living systems and ensuring they are continually self-producing; we often unintentionally destroy the organisation of work groups when we restructure. We are unaware of the aspects of organisation that our change processes will impact on.

21 In the following discussion around these three aspects, to avoid confusion, I will use the word ‘organisation’ biologically, as referred to by Maturana and Varela (1987); I will call the organisations that we work in, ‘work groups’.
Autopoiesis also enables living systems to be ‘autonomous’. “A system is autonomous if it can specify its own laws, what is proper to it” and an understanding of autonomy of organisation emerges with an understanding of autopoietic organisation (Maturana & Varela, 1987, p 48). A distinctive feature of the organisation of living beings is that their only product is themselves, with no separation between producer and product. The being and doing of an autopoietic unity are inseparable, and this is their specific mode of organization. (Maturana & Varela, 1987, p 49)

This concept has serious implications for work groups, in that they usually separate the product from the people and determine outputs and outcomes separate to an understanding or integration of the people involved.

As living systems, work groups cannot help but continuously change, either through the impact of the external environment or because of their own internal dynamics (Maturana & Varela, 1987). As a result of this impact of change, the structure will change. This structural change may, or may not affect the organisation of the unity. If a history of structural change does not alter the organisation of that unity, it is called “ontogeny” (Maturana & Varela, 1987, p 74). This ontogenic transformation of a unity will continue, unless the transformation results in the disintegration of the unity.

Unities that exist side by side, such as work groups, can interact without causing change in each other. The impact that they have on each other, i.e., on their ontogenies, does not alter the organisation of each unity. It just impacts on their structures, or the unities impact on their environment. Maturana and Varela (1987, p 75) describe such a history of “mutual congruent structural change” as “structural coupling”, i.e., the autopoietic unity and its environment has not disintegrated.

There are four domains of structure (Maturana & Varela, 1987).

1. Domain of states - when structure changes, but organisation remains unchanged, i.e., class identity remains unchanged.
2. Domain of destructive changes - when structure changes and there is a loss of organisation, i.e., there is loss of class identity.
3. Domain of perturbations - those interactions that result in changes of state.
4. Domain of destructive interactions - are those perturbations that cause a destructive change.

A living system will exist as long as it drifts in a domain of perturbations. There are always perturbations; but it's destructive change that can destroy a unity, not perturbations. I relate this to work groups, for example, when a sub-section of that work group is disbanded or restructured, it will be felt as a destructive change to the sub-section, but may well be a minor perturbation to the larger work group. In other words, the organisation of the whole remains basically unchanged. If we learn to understand the difference between perturbations and destructive change, we may be able to identify and acknowledge the impact of each during processes of change.

Structural coupling focuses on operationally independent systems. If organisms are to be maintained as dynamic systems in their environment, then they need to be compatible with their environment. Maturana and Varela (1987, p 102) call this compatibility with the environment, “adaptability”. If there is a destructive interaction between a living being and its environment and the living being disintegrates as an autopoietic system, it can be said to have lost its adaptation. They conclude that a living system can only survive if there is conservation of autopoiesis and conservation of adaptation. Therefore, work groups as living systems need continual self-renewal as well as adaptability. They also say that “the ontogenic structural change of a living being in an environment always occurs as a structural drift congruent with the structural drift of the environment” (p 103). I interpret this as meaning that a work group can continually impact on itself and its environment, thereby creating continual structural change but maintaining its own organisation, undestroyed. This can only occur if the work group does this simultaneously and compatibly with the ontogenic structural changes occurring in the environment around it. If work groups do not self-renew and take responsibility for change processes as their structures change, they have lost their ability to conserve their organisation and adaptation and are unable to continue functioning. This explains to me why many of our change processes do not work and are either destructive or inappropriately timed. Much of our current restructuring in organisations is not conserving autopoiesis or adaptability, even though this is the professed aim.
Following the biological look at organisations as living systems, I then turned to examine other views of systems concepts. I have read various books about these theories, listened to numerous lectures and been involved in many conversations about these issues. However, I still struggled to match these theories to my own organisational experiences. As I participated and observed my way through this research, I often reflected on what a systems way of thinking would uncover in a particular situation. I have been acknowledged for being good at conceptual and organisation-wide thinking and for thinking outside the ‘box’. However, I still couldn’t come to grips with what the application of systems concepts could really mean in practice.

It was when I read Wilber’s (1995) book *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution* that my interest was re-ignited because I’d found a book that ‘brought it all together’ in a way that I understood and could relate to my organisational experiences. In his work, Wilber (1995) brings the scientific approach of many together, looking for links and connections. It gave depth to my understanding of why organisations are living systems and I found that I was applying my learning from Wilber’s (1995) book to work situations.

**ORGANISATIONS AS HOLONS**

One of the many views of ecological sciences and systems sciences that Wilber (1995, p 6) examines is ‘deep ecology’ and in this regard, cites Forbes as perceiving ourselves as “being deeply bound together with other people and with the surrounding nonhuman forms of life in a complex interconnected web of life, that is to say, a true community”. We can view our organisations as part of the ‘interconnected web of life’ and therefore honour the principles of non-exploitation and respect for all; but Wilber (1995) argues that this holistic systems view is still only half right, as it needs to be set in its own larger context. This larger context is one of “development or evolution - the idea that wholes grow and evolve”, which he believes (1995, p 6) is the essence of modern systems sciences. He refers to the three major domains of development, i.e., the physiosphere (matter), the biosphere (life) and the noosphere (mind).

Even though these domains are united by the regularities of dynamic patterns, the natural sciences are frequently split from the human sciences. I began to realise that frequently in my research, I have concentrated on separating the domains, for example, at one stage concentrating on interconnectedness, at another stage on chaos and uncertainly, while at
another time on organisational planning and structures. What closes the gap and brings the diverging theories together, according to Wilbur (1995), is that they all work towards a higher order and higher structural organisation. The principle is that matter, when in disequilibrium, will under its own power transform into a higher and more structured order - usually called “order out of chaos” (Wilbur, 1995, p 14). Through his explanations, I was beginning to see the inter-relationships and connections between the different theories.

It was when Wilber (1995) delved into the aspects of ‘hierarchy’ and ‘heterarchy’ within the sciences, that I began to get excited about the application of these concepts to understanding our behaviour in organisations. He identifies hierarchy (or ‘wholeness’) as occurring when rule or governance is established by a set of priorities that establish those things that are more important and those that are less ... [and heterarchy when] rule or governance is established by a pluralistic and egalitarian interplay of all parties. .... In any developmental sequence, what is whole at one stage becomes a part of a larger whole at the next stage. (pp 16 - 17)

For example, in an organisation it is easy to see that an individual is a whole in their own right, but only a part of their unit which is a whole in its own right, but only part of the organisational whole and so on. Wilber (1995, p 18) uses Koestler’s term holon to describe “that which is a whole in one context, is simultaneously a part in another”. As each new holon emerges, it includes the capacities, patterns and functions of the parts and in addition, adds its own unique capacities. It is only in this sense that a new holon can be said to be ‘higher’ and more valuable. The whole becomes more than the sum of its parts, with ‘becoming more’ being equated with hierarchy. Therefore, normal hierarchy becomes an order of increasing holons. As a whole becomes part of a larger whole, “the whole provides a principle not found in the isolated parts alone” (Wilber, 1995, p 18). No doubt this is what the expression ‘the whole is greater than the sum of its parts’ means.

Wilber (1995) uses the word ‘holarchy’ interchangeability with the word ‘hierarchy’ and argues that the only way to achieve holism is through holarchy (i.e., hierarchy) and not through heterarchy, which he believes only differentiates without integration. These hierarchical relationships and stages of growth are often called ‘linear’, but the pattern is anything but linear, since it is “interdependent and complexly interactive” (Wilber, 1995, p 19). So terms such as ‘levels’ or ‘strata’ in relation to hierarchy must be used with care. In
addition, the process of increasing wholeness does not occur in reverse (i.e., when moving ‘down’ from whole to parts). My experience is that there is little understanding in organisations of these complex relationships between and within hierarchies and heterarchies.

Wilber (1995) explains how development occurs in stages in hierarchical networks, with the holistic patterns emerging later, when the parts have unified. He uses the example of molecules, then cells, then organs, then complex organisms - where they don’t all develop at once, but do so in stages. Hierarchies can exert an “upward causation” from within the parts, which affect the whole; and just as much exert a “downward causation” from the whole to the parts (Wilber, 1995, p 20). This reminds me of the continuous arguments and discussions I hear in organisations, of whether change must be led from the top to be effective, or whether it must be led from below, i.e., the ‘grass roots’. Some believe it’s a combination of both. No doubt, a better understanding of systems concepts would help us understand these complex and subtle influences within organisations.

Yet when we look within a given level of any hierarchical pattern, the elements of that level operate by heterarchy.

That is, no one element seems to be especially more important or more dominant, and each contributes more or less equally to the health of the whole level. But a higher-order whole, of which this lower-order whole is a part, can exert an overriding influence on each of its components. (Wilber, 1995, p 20)

Wilber (1995) uses the example of the arm, and how your mind can decide to move your arm, effecting every cell in that arm. But this cannot happen in reverse, i.e., cells in your arm cannot decide to move your arm. Reflecting on change, it seems to me that change can (and is) led from both ‘above’ and ‘below’, however ‘above’ can (and does) exert an overriding influence on ‘below’.

Up to now, I had focused on individual ego and power, believing naively that a certain non-judgmental equality and trust would solve these problems within organisations. However, the development of hierarchies will involve the larger wholes being able to exert influence over the lower-order wholes (Wilber, 1995). Unfortunately, this influence of the ‘wider wholes’ can become destructive when it turns to repression, arrogance and alienation of ‘lower levels’. No wonder I have spent so much time in my Diary bemoaning the fate of individuals within
organisations. I had been focusing on the pathological or diseased influences of hierarchies, as many of our organisations are based on domination hierarchies, which reinforce negative and base human qualities and the use of actual or implied threat of force. Wilber (1995, p 23) argues that the cure for pathological hierarchy is not to get rid of hierarchies, but to develop actualization hierarchies, which maximise the organism’s potential. The solution, he believes, is not heterarchy, which would only produce fragmentation instead of wholes. I was deeply affected when considering these issues, as I realised that our hierarchical systems can be healthy living systems with healthy relationships between the ‘levels’ and that when things go wrong, the cure is not necessarily in more ‘sameness’ and heterarchy. I had not understood that if operating naturally, both hierarchy and heterarchy needed to exist as a healthy and natural phenomena of living systems. These ideals are easy to articulate, but not so easy to create, as the related issues of power and inequality are well embedded within our organisations, and the issues are so frequently invisible or unspoken in organisations.

Wilber (1995) then turns to look at the issue that he believes is often avoided, that of pathological or dominator heterarchies. He states that this occurs when “all values become equalized and homogenized in a flatland devoid of individual values or identities; nothing can be said to be deeper or higher or better in any meaningful sense” (pp 23-24). Pathological hierarchy can be said to be “the one dominating the many”, whereas pathological heterarchy can be said to be “the many dominating the one” (p 24). Such group domination is an issue within organisations, as our own individuality can be suppressed.

The ideal is to have a healthy balance between both heterarchy and hierarchy. Wilber (1995, p 31) calls this balance “holarchy, with each link being an intrinsic whole that was simultaneously a part of a larger whole - and the entire series nested in Spirit”. In practice, I believe that this requires people within organisations to identify the heterarchy and hierarchy that they are situated in; to examine the way that it operates within the organisation; and to identify the impact that it is having both within and outside the organisation. Provided that people are willing to be open to continual movement and change, and have an openness to feedback and critically reflection, it would be possible on an ongoing basis to identify and implement actions that would create more effective, meaningful and caring environments within which we work.
SYSTEMS PARADIGMS

To further understand systems paradigms, I met with one of my Critical Research Friends, Robert Woog. Through our discussions, I began to broaden my understanding of the common systems categories, which have come to be known as hard, soft and appreciative, and more recently, ethical has been added. Organisations may be thought of as belonging to these systems categories.

The hard systems approach is concerned with the discernable or more visible characteristics of the system under study, such as structure, capital, policies and procedures. This approach to systems analysis is well described by Ackoff and Smery (1972) in their book about purposeful systems.

Soft systems approaches deal more with the nature of the interaction within the organisation and the systems interaction with its environment. In this regard, soft systems describe more the behavioural dynamics responsible for the individual nature of organisations (Checkland, 1981). It includes areas such as relationships and ways that groups interact.

An appreciative systems perspective focuses on the interplay between experience and value judgements, which according to Vickers (1983) are capable collectively and cumulatively to determine the nature of systems, that has a strongly embedded human element.

Ethical systems (Van Gigch, 1974) look at the morality of systems, in terms of the impact of change in the system on the values that people hold.

Ontologically22 an organisation may be seen as consisting of all the common systems categories of hard, soft, appreciative and ethical. However, as a generalisation, we deal more with the hard systemic aspects of organisations because they are the ones that are self evident, amenable to direct intervention, more easily ‘measured’ and I believe less threatening as they can be seen as impersonal. Recently there has been a call for ethical and appreciative considerations when planning, designing and implementing organisational improvements.

22 An ontological view of systems can be defined as being “in the context of reality, what is assumed to be out there, what is” (Flood, 1990, p 94) and can be posed as a question, “what is the nature of reality?” (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p 83).
This acknowledges the need to bring in our intuitive judgements, inspiration, subjective probability, importance of unique events (Van Gigch, 1974) and interpretive thinking (Flood, 1990). Both Ulrich (1994) and Flood and Jackson (1991) argue for paradigmatic plurality when dealing with organisational systems.

The challenge for systems practitioners seeking to make improvements, is to be able to deal with organisations as systems, which are filled with invisible or unspoken tensions of difference and requisite variety. It requires an approach that finds coherence between judgements of what is ethically desirable and what is technically feasible.

The difficulty is that organisations focus primarily on improving the system and take a particular slant, usually around planned expectations. When improvement does not occur as expected, effort is then put into investigation and measurement to find out how the organisation can increase its productivity and income. Systems design (Flood, 1991) which focuses on transformation and change, and the questioning of assumptions on which old forms have been built, is frequently ignored. The tendency is to keep focusing on organisational improvement, finding fault and to do what was originally planned in the first place.

**PURPOSE AND CONSCIOUSNESS**

As I frequently note in my Diary, we seem to be continuously surprised by events and outcomes that unexpectedly occur in organisations. Therefore we need to try to move beyond ‘purposeful consciousness’ i.e., our set goals and aims, because such “mere purposive rationality unaided by such phenomena as art, religion, dream, and the like, is necessarily pathogenic and destructive of life” (Bateson, 1972, p 146). No wonder many people feel our organisations are pathogenic, when they leave so little room for ‘other phenomena’. In organisations, purpose will determine what we perceive and what we want to consciously concentrate on. Since purpose determines our focus, “what we get is a bag of tricks - some of them very valuable tricks” (Bateson, 1972, p 433). We achieve these ‘tricks’, but we do not achieve wisdom. Bateson (1972) equates wisdom with an understanding of whole systems. Our lack of systemic understanding of organisations is seen through our heavy reliance on tools and techniques, only some of which appear to be effective.
The difficulty with increasing our consciousness within organisations is that when we increase consciousness in one area, we automatically decrease consciousness in another area. Bateson (1972) uses an example from television to demonstrate this. If we increase coverage of news in one country, then there will be an overall decrease in the number of news events covered. Selecting our purpose determines where we need to increase our consciousness, so we will need to do this carefully, knowing that there will be an overall decrease in consciousness. Purpose “is a short-cut device to enable you to get quickly at what you want; not to act with maximum wisdom in order to live, but to follow the shortest logical or causal path to get what you next want”; and a significant paradox is that when we discard purpose, we achieve purpose (Bateson, 1972, p 433).

Consciousness and purpose is characteristic of people and it’s becoming an increasing problem, as modern technology helps us to more quickly and efficiently implement our purposes, thereby further disturbing our systems and relationships (Bateson, 1972). However, relying on purpose and common sense and ignoring wisdom, i.e., systemic wisdom, always leads to “punishment” (Bateson, 1972, p 434). We regularly experience this through the short-term strategies put in place, which ignore systemic impacts within organisations. We continually find ourselves in a ‘mess’, either blaming the organisation or blaming ourselves and not understanding how the ‘mess’ occurred.

And the terrible thing about such situations is that inevitably they shorten the time span of all planning. Emergency is present or only just around the corner; and long-term wisdom must therefore be sacrificed to expediency, even though there is a dim awareness that expediency will never give a long-term solution. (Bateson, 1972, p 436)

In developing a systemic view, Bateson (1972) believes that an important first step is humility. He proposes this not as a moral principle, but as a scientific philosophy. In place of arrogance is the understanding that “man is only a part of larger systems and that the part can never control the whole” - even though we delude ourselves into thinking that we can; and we also delude ourselves that we can control others through simple linear control (Bateson, 1972, pp 437 - 438).

It may need to be the responsibility of individuals to remedy many of our problems that have been developed through conscious purpose, by drawing on all of our creative resources to
minimise the impact of our conscious mind. Bateson (1972) gives the example of an artist who consciously decides to paint a picture in order to earn income. However, the artist will have to "relax that arrogance in favor of a creative experience in which his conscious mind plays only a small part" (Bateson, 1972, p 438). We may have to attempt the difficult task of not consciously replacing an existing view for another, but of synthesising two often opposing views. I believe we can do this through the application of fuzzy logic processes that support us in working with paradoxes and opposing points of view.

**DREAMING OUR ORGANISATIONS**

Our organisations are not created just by the systems that we overtly or covertly put in place. Our dreams, feelings and atmospheres also create them. Organizations are therefore not simply bodies,

but dreaming bodies, physical entities moved by dreams as well as organizational structures, by emotions as well as spirits and money. The organization, together with its dreams and undercurrents, constitutes a field that is manifest in physical structures, human feelings, a particular atmosphere, and specific jobs and roles. If the field is congruent, then what a group believes and what it does are identical. (Mindell, 1992, p 14)

My own experience has mainly been one of incongruence within organisations. I have met very few people whose beliefs match what they regularly do in organisations. Most beliefs are left either unspoken or unidentified. If spoken, they are frequently ignored, ridiculed or squashed as being irrelevant or unimportant.

Beliefs are part of what Mindell (1992, p 15) identifies as "fields" within organisations, i.e., the "natural phenomena that include everyone, are omnipresent, and exert forces upon things in their midst". We think that we manage and organise ourselves; but just as much, fields manage and create us. Fields are usually expressed through our beliefs and values and are the invisible glue that holds groups together. They appear to us in our dreams, stories and myths. It's this dreamlike nature of fields that make it so difficult for us to control our organisations and deal with our problems.

The dreaming field influences us as much as the visible, known factors do. Being rational, logical and scientific will not help us work effectively within our organisation; we also need
to be spiritual, intuitive and creative. Through our dreams, we can visualise our organisational fields, knowing that our organisational fields also exert influence on us. As Mindell (1992) explains, we can feel the atmosphere - it may be heavy or light, attractive or repelling. He believes that we need to live “according to both inner feelings and sensitivity to outer situations” (p 17). The “world is a dreambody, a dreamlike entity that manifests itself in a physical reality” (p 19). If we start to lose sight of our dream life, then we lose sight of dream and physical information as primary data, and our civilization is in trouble (Berman, 1990).

This surfaces the invisible and unspoken in organisations, giving validity to the impact of our feelings, dreams and intuition about change and movement in organisations, instead of just focusing on plans, processes, inputs and outputs.
CHAPTER 5  ASPECTS OF CHANGE:
Illusions, Feelings and Unpredictability

The illusion of organisations
The need for dialogue and 'real talking'
Focusing on structures and not people
How do we feel?
Imposing change
Invisible and unspoken
Ways of changing
THE ILLUSION OF ORGANISATIONS

As I write in my Diary, I notice that I feel very loosely connected to my own organisation. I can feel in my ‘gut’ the futility of many of the ways we do things, what we do, and how we treat each other. I can feel the illusion of organisations. I struggle to surface this unspoken aspect of organisations.

I can conceive of (or construct) organisations as real systems, but perhaps it’s our perception of what organisations are, and what we are doing in them, that’s the illusion. Similarly, “it is not the universe itself but our perceptions of it that constitutes the delusion” (Blofeld, 1970, p 52). Illusion can be defined as “playing false, and it implies that we are creating a representation of reality that is not coherent with reality as a whole” (Bohm & Edwards, 1991, pp 156 - 157). For example, illusion occurs when we defend ourselves against evidence presented to us that something may be wrong with our thoughts or with what we do, such as when we’re told we have done something ridiculous. We then project our thoughts back to the other person, feeling comfortable when we conclude that it’s the other person who is really ridiculous (Bohm & Edwards, 1991). In creating such illusions through our thought processes, we “will just go on indefinitely creating more and more problems” (Bohm & Edwards, 1991, p 172). Whyte (1994, p 277) believes that “there is a core delusion at the centre of all our struggles in all organizations”. This delusion narrows our sense of self and ignores the greater world beyond our organisations. We narrowly identify with our organisations, allow the organisational needs and goals to replace those of our own, and “then wonder why it has such a stranglehold on our lives” (Whyte, 1994, p 277). For me, the illusion in organisations comes from pretence and from an individuality that does not honour our interconnectedness.

The main focus within organisations appears to be on structures and an illusion that when we design new structures, we will more effectively achieve organisational goals or work more effectively in ways espoused by the latest theories, such as quality management. Therefore, structural change is equated with organisational change. However, do bees create a new beehive and believe that the new structure will produce new and different honey? The beehive is only a shell and even though it’s a necessary structure for their survival, it alone can’t produce honey, just as structures alone within organisations can’t produce outcomes. Structures can’t add meaning to our lives - it’s who has what function, the external...
environment, resources, capability, interrelationships, feelings and soul that are important. To guard against illusions in all of these processes, Bohm and Edwards (1991) suggest that inquiry through collective and individual dialogue is essential. I agree.

**THE NEED FOR DIALOGUE AND ‘REAL TALKING’**

Usually, when people surface sensitive issues or unexpected occurrences, it often gets put aside, into the ‘too hard basket’. Particularly the ‘unspeakable’ issues seem just too hard to handle. The primary focus for change appears to remain on restructuring and on step-by-step planning exercises. “To question this approach to strategy is itself tricky - there seems to be a logical rationale - usually one which incorporates the idea that anyone that questions it is both powerless and irrational” (Cairnes, 1994, p 101). I’ve observed that we don’t have the facilitation skills, dialogue skills or the understanding of group processes that is required to handle these issues. What’s missing are the metalevel skills. The usual kind of staff meetings or committees don’t seem to work any more. The kind of facilitation for meetings that’s required involves much more than running a discussion or problem solving. It’s about working with group processes, putting time aside for non-judgmental exploration of group issues and not sticking to an inappropriate agenda. It’s about more than tolerance, since tolerance is “merely putting up with, rather than having a dialogue” (Bohm & Edwards, 1991, p 171).

Everyone seems to now be using the word ‘dialogue’. It’s replaced the word ‘discussion’. Very few people seem to understand the difference. Bohm and Edwards (1991, p 177) define dialogue as “meaning passing through or flowing between the participants” and they distinguish it from discussion where the aim is to win. During discussion, “you might say, I agree with this and disagree with that, but fundamentally you want your view to prevail” (Bohm & Edwards, 1991, p 177). I constantly see this occurring, but what I don’t see is people simply listening to each other and to the real meaning of what is being said. I don’t see us hearing what is said or truly understanding its meaning, asking for further explanation and clarification until there is real shared meaning.
According to Bohm and Edwards (1991), dialogue allows the deeper issues to emerge and to be discussed, rather than just staying with the surface issues. The group must face unpleasant issues, which allows them to gradually begin to understand the process of collective thought, instead of avoiding such issues in order to feel more comfortable. We have to stop defending our opinions and become aware that they are only our assumptions; we must become free to express opinions, no matter how foolish or wrong they may seem. We need to remain aware of our opinions and suspend them, rather than suppressing or avoiding them. In using such processes, dialogue becomes a key way of revealing what is happening in human relationships within organisations. This can only occur if groups meet regularly and for a long time, since key issues can’t be avoided for ever and eventually, emotional issues will arise. The group will then have to examine whether they can stay together in order to discover what is really happening. In this way, every member of the group participates in the general consciousness of the group, as well as contributing to that consciousness. Through dialogue, there is no pressure to conform, nor any urge to rebel, but rather a sense of freedom is created as new states of harmony are continuously formed. Through these processes of dialogue a new form of culture is created, the kind that helps in transforming our cultures. Very few groups attempt true dialogue. I only know of two that have - and I’ve had feedback that it does work and make a difference.

How can we create such environments of dialogue throughout organisations? It’s almost unimaginable that many groups would be prepared, or be given the freedom, to meet regularly to dialogue, i.e., with no pre-determined agenda, no imposed questions and no imposed purpose. This could well form the basis of another research project, as I believe that through
such dialogue, a space could be created to raise many of the issues dealt with in this research project, for example, the need to just ‘be’, creating supportive environments or implementing heart-felt ways of working. I did try this method for six months with my own team, replacing the traditional staff meeting with a facilitated action learning process, based on dialogue and strategic questioning. It had mixed results, with the dialogue creating more cohesion and understanding in the group, but the lack of focus on tasks and projects creating some perceived decrease in accountability. Overall though, it did create a basis for moving forward more strongly as a group, following the six months. In fact, to enter a new phase of scenario planning.

Another way of viewing dialogue is through Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule’s (1986, p 144) description of “really talking”, which they differentiate from didactic talk in which the speaker’s intention is to hold forth rather than share ideas. In didactic talk, each participant may report experience, but there is no attempt among participants to join together to arrive at some new understanding. “Really talking” requires careful listening; it implies a mutually shared agreement that together you are creating the optimum setting so that half-baked or emergent ideas can grow. “Real talking” reaches deep into the experience of each participant; it also draws on the analytical abilities of each. Conversation ... includes discourse and exploration, talking and listening, questions, argument, speculation, and sharing.

This way of working requires levels of awareness and consciousness that see the difference between didactic talk and ‘really talking’ and also see the difference between the surface symptoms and the deeper causes of many of our problems in organisations. It means moving on from the usually masculine-type approach that we are used to in organisations, towards incorporating a more feminist-type approach. “In ‘real talk’ domination is absent, reciprocity and cooperation are prominent” and we move away from the continual need to “toughen up and fight to get ideas across” (Belenky et al, 1986, p 146). It takes time for people to experience new learning and to practice and persevere with new ways of working. Unfortunately, organisations don’t seem to have the time. They have to see instant results, instant plans and instant outcomes. In the meantime many of our organisations become sicker and sicker.
In focusing on human inquiry during my research, I recorded in my Diary many indicators of lack of dialogue or lack of “really talking” in the conversations I heard and the statements I saw in business plans. For example, ‘business will be much more structured’, or ‘little time will be spent on lengthy discourse’, or ‘the focus is on action and commitment, not discussion’. We need to expand such limited perceptions as much as possible. There is little recognition within large, bureaucratic organisations, that much can be learnt from alternate approaches to that of only focusing on actions and outputs. Bergson (1992, p 136) describes the limits of conventional ways as follows:

Let us notice that the artist has always been considered an “idealistic”. We mean by that that he is less preoccupied than ourselves with the positive and material side of life. He is, in the real sense of the word, “absent-minded”. Why then, being detached from reality to a greater degree, does he manage to see in it more things? We should not understand why it is that the vision we ordinarily have of eternal objects and of ourselves were not a vision which we had been obliged to narrow and drain by our attachment to reality, our need for living and acting. As a matter of fact, it would be easy to show that the more we are preoccupied with living, the less we are inclined to contemplate, and that the necessities of action tend to limit the field of vision.

In avoiding contemplation and in staying primarily focused on immediate outputs and actions, we continue to limit the possibilities of our achievements within organisations. In trying to integrate this into processes that I facilitate in organisations, I am often met with heavy resistance and views that ‘it’s a waste of time’.

**FOCUSING ON STRUCTURES AND NOT PEOPLE**

The focus on action, commitment and structures is not producing the results we want.
We trained hard, but it seemed every time we were beginning to form teams we would be reorganised. I was to learn later in life that we tend to meet every situation by reorganising, and a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress while producing confusion, inefficiency and demoralisation. (Caius Petronius, Pro-Consul at Bithynis, in the time of Nero, AD 66, source unknown)

I have been involved in many restructures, downsizing and economic rationalist approaches. In analysing and reflecting on this as a practitioner and researcher, I have observed that when I, as a facilitator, succeed in helping groups to integrate contemplation and space for all the voices be heard, the outcomes are quite different to that expected. Destructive conflict as such, does not occur and issues are resolved more creatively and often faster than expected.

In environments of threat and uncertainty, I see a number of things occurring. Individuals focus on the politically ‘right’ things to do or politically ‘right’ people to align with; groups develop rational arguments as to why they should stay the same; many believe that there is a secret master plan (and there may not be). There is widespread belief that new management cannot possibly understand the complexity and functions within the organisation (and they may not); gossip takes over, with constant guesswork about what is happening; there is apathy and loss of focus; some ‘cover their backsides’ and go to great lengths to look good and appear indispensable; many believe that the organisation ‘owes’ them something; a few enjoy the challenge and change. Many take changes such as restructuring and downsizing very personally and often feel devastated. Most look for strong leadership (but there are not many strong and humble leaders around).

From a human inquiry perspective, what I would emphasise most about restructuring processes is how powerless staff feel and how meaningless some of the consultative processes are. Aspects of new structures such as microstructures and statements of duty are usually written by a small group of people. What is put in place often does not meet the needs of most people in the organisation. People ‘see through’ their leaders very quickly. I hear people constantly talking about senior management and about their contradictory language and the lack of trust (on both sides). People very quickly pick up any mismatch between what is said and what is done. In restructuring, the focus appears to be on developing new and innovative structures and ways of working, but the prevailing view is usually one of not taking risks by trying something new! We end up with structures that are designed in the way that they have always been designed, that feel comfortable, even if it’s contradictory to the philosophy being
espoused. New words might be being spoken, but we keep thinking in quite linear and
traditional ways. These are widespread problems in organisations. In such environments,
learning is not valued or nurtured and it’s extremely difficult to establish meaningful
relationships or dialogue.

Following restructuring there is usually a scene of bitterness, lack of motivation and
commitment, uncertainty about the purpose of the new organisation and uncertainty about the
values that are needed to maintain and promote the new organisation. Having worked in such
environments, what emerged out of my reflection in my Diary, is:

- how tedious it is to be there - our egos often get in the way and there are lots of ‘I’m right,
you’re wrong’ attitudes;
- how difficult it is to understand the cultural clashes occurring in the organisation -
between the way we work now and the strategies being put in place to force people to
work in new ways;
- how under pressure, people fall back to using known methodologies and strategies and
how this clashes with new philosophies and paradigms.

It’s numbers, economics and politics that dictate restructures. Structural, linear and top-down
approaches are put into place and then it’s assumed that the people within the organisation
will change - change to fit the new jobs, change to meet new roles, change in the way they
work, surviving with little bitterness and maintaining commitment. It needs to be the opposite,
with the initial focus on developing new mindsets. Focusing only on new structures will not
make us see with ‘new eyes’. The changes must come from within and not from without. And
such change require learning.

Most people define learning too narrowly as mere “problem solving”, so they focus on
identifying and correcting errors in the external environment. Solving problems is
important. But if learning is to persist, managers and employees must also look
inward. They need to critically reflect on their own behaviour, identify the ways they
often inadvertently contribute to the organization’s problems, and then change how
they act. In particular, they must learn how the very way they go about defining and
solving problems can be a source of problems in its own right. ....

So, whenever their single-loop strategies go wrong, they become defensive, screen out
criticism, and put the “blame” on anyone and everyone but themselves. In short, their
ability to learn shuts down precisely at the moment they need it most. (Argyris, 1990, p 177)

During restructuring, most people engage in single-loop learning, for example, learning new conflict resolution techniques. However, we need to move into double-loop learning and be concerned with, for example, the surfacing and resolution of conflict. In single-loop learning we avoid examining highly predictable activities and in double-loop learning, through examining such activities we start to create changes that begin to effect all of our theories-in-use. I would think, that in not examining our theories-in-use and in not engaging in double-loop learning, we continue to effectively reinforce the status quo - despite all efforts at change.

**HOW DO WE FEEL?**

As organisations go down paths of major change, many people feel rejected and ‘used’ by the organisation. If what they did for so many years was valued, why isn’t it okay any more? Give me enough good reasons why I should change? People don’t, or can’t understand the changes and cannot see concrete examples of how the world is changing; they resist and sabotage processes for change. They don’t take in messages that many things have changed around them and that different responses are now required. Over time we get very hooked into our values, beliefs, attitudes and actions, and don’t wish to change them. Organisations need to learn how to handle transitions

so that they reinforce commitment and build the cooperation that brings synergies. This means, first of all, managing with an eye on the past and the future as well as the present: in any major change, minimizing the losses people have to face while allowing grieving about the past; providing positive visions of the future; and reducing the uncertainty of the present by active communication. After a transition, it means actively organizing to motivate the search for synergies ... to perceive that their fate is shared and they can help one another. (Kanter, 1989, p 346)

Despite all the literature about the way we need to be and the way we need to work in the future, it is my experience that not many people actually understand the implications for themselves and their organisations; most feel alienated and confused. The grieving model which identifies people moving through the cycles of denial, anger, resistance, acceptance and

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23 Observations on behaviours I’ve observed, recorded in Diary 13.2.97 (see Appendix 4 for extract from Diary).
change, doesn’t quite fit any more. Perhaps the cycles between change are too short for many people to recover. Perhaps they are justified in remaining angry or bitter. There is little debriefing to enable movement and there is lack of openness of information. There is often an invisible or unspoken feeling of fear within organisations.

Our leaders want us to see times of restructuring as times of opportunity, with business carrying on as usual. We’re supposed to meet our project objectives quicker than planned, create new initiatives and accelerate new projects. Most leaders are not really interested in change processes. Their bottom line is about setting outcomes and performance indicators and meeting them. This is what survival is seen to be about.

We all get on at work
At least that’s what we say

We all strive to achieve organisational goals
At least that’s what we say

There’s always a good reason why our planned outcomes are delayed
At least that’s what we say

Where is the space for what we believe in
To do as we believe it should be done
To celebrate as we believe we should celebrate

How can I make room for the unplanned as well as the planned?
The personal as well as the organisational?
The spiritual as well as the intellectual?
The interconnectedness as well as the individual?

**IMPOSING CHANGE**

Restructuring doesn’t help people take control of change - it imposes change. Views about massive or continual organisational change are very varied. There is possibly a bit of truth in all views. Some just see the political games and maneuverings, with the rhetoric being about change for the good of all, while ignoring the outrageous mismanagement, destruction and turmoil. Others see that it’s about the survival of the fittest within organisations, speeding up their responsiveness and strategic change strategies. Some see the need to refocus on core business, cutting back on non core support units.
I've observed how some people just opt out when massive change comes and try to stop others being constructively involved - it's almost like they're saying 'you are a traitor to your organisation if you support the change'. For those who try to keep functioning constructively and energetically within times of tremendous change and restructuring, their learning centres around things like valuing differences, scenario planning, managing upwards, contextualising their work, understanding what keeps their team/group together, networking and a sense of timing. This is quite different to the types of learning that groups focused on in stable environments, which are the more operational skills, such as planning, delegation and time management skills. There needs to be a focus on individual/personal learning and community development, within a context of meeting the needs of the individual, but not at the expense of the 'many'.

Organisations seem to go through evolutionary processes - of ignoring the need for dramatic change; having it forced upon them; looking for leadership and methods of implementation; starting to use a new language; then changing behaviour in pockets and the 'pockets' then helping others to change their behaviour. However, organisations need revolution as well as evolution. Evolution can be represented by continuous improvement and practicality; revolution can be represented by transformation and creativity. How do we sustain both revolution and evolution within organisations?

**INVISIBLE AND UNSPoken**

Through restructuring we try to change organisational culture without doing it with our hearts and feelings. As we impose change, we often put aside our values and thoughts, and unconsciously reinforce the existing practices within the organisation. We put aside the invisible and the unspoken. These invisible areas equate to what Spencer and Spencer(1993, p 11) represent as the submerged part of an iceberg (see Figure 5). The tip, which is seen and easily measured, involves skills and knowledge in the area of known problems and context. The submerged part is the largest and most important part and is what drives an organisation forward. These are the values, motives, beliefs, reflections and individual self concept. This latter part is what is usually ignored in organisations. Spencer and Spencer (1993) state that many organisations recruit on the basis of skills and knowledge and assume that recruits have the underlying motives and traits that the organisations requires. They suggest that it's the
opposite that should occur, i.e., recruit for motives and traits and then train for skills and knowledge.

![Figure 5: Iceberg Model](image)

When I was on a particular selection panel\(^2\), we asked interviewees questions on organisational change, learning and capability. I noticed that despite the huge variation in individual views, there were common themes in everyone's comments. These themes focused on 'invisible' aspects such as the need to feel supported and valued; being an important part of the process; understanding why change is required and being prepared and ready; seeing genuine commitment to change at all levels; working in an environment of trust; and being empowered to be involved and make decisions. Most interest centred around two of these aspects. Firstly, readiness for change, with people asking to be told of change in advance and the consequences for themselves. They want to know what strategies will be put in place to prepare them for change. But I question whether we are ever ready for unwanted change? Is readiness to do with attitude? Is it the need for openness - and this goes against readiness. We are often reluctant to understand or change and an attitude of openness may help prepare us and allow some understanding to emerge. Secondly, the need to feel valued and empowered in some way during the change.

Are these the two key ingredients for organisational change? Token efforts are made within organisations, but these issues usually drop off the agenda. How do we really know if someone is ready? How do we help them develop readiness? Or how do they help

\(^2\) Thirteen interviews recorded in Diary, 27.4.95.
themselves? Often they don’t seem to help themselves and keep experiencing the same anguish, the same difficulties over and over again. I know there are innumerable theories and strategies, but deep down do we really know what lies behind readiness and resistance? We intellectually understand and desire so much - why can’t we put it into practice? I believe that intellectual logic can frequently hinder and not help us. It’s very easy to understand and know and very hard to practice and experience. Do we need such dissonance to create movement which allows new insights and practices to emerge?

Why can’t we create the futures we desire so much? Is it our desires that are inappropriate - since all that we are frequently doing is desiring to change what we have for something else, which only creates another set of problems. As Krishnamurti (in Lutyens, 1954, p 72) says, we need transformation which is “not a mere substitution of one object of desire for another object of desire”. Perhaps our fear is not of the unknown, but of “losing the accumulated known” (Krishnamurti in Lutyens, 1954, p 59).

WAYS OF CHANGING

Despite our desire to predict change and prepare for it, it’s extremely difficult to predict the impact of change within a living system. Prediction “reveals what we as observers expect to happen” (Maturana & Varela, 1987, p 123). As we do not always have all the information, or may not be able to understand the information that is available, we cannot always predict the impact of change on a living system. Change and evolution often occur in a very unpredictable manner. It can be likened to a “sculptor with wanderlust, .... collecting a thread here, and hunk of tin there, a piece of wood here, and he combines them in a way that their structure and circumstances allow, with no reason other than what is able to combine them” (Maturana & Varela, 1987, p 117). Even though we can’t predict the specific path that change will take and its outcome, we may be able to predict it’s general direction.

Change in living systems can occur in ways that we can’t understand. As Berman (1990, p 299) says, “consciousness is a transmittable entity, and ... an entire culture can eventually undergo very serious changes as the result of the slow accumulation of enough psychic or somatic changes on an invisible level”. Maturana and Varela (1987) cite the study of a colony of wild macaques on a subtropical Japanese island. As part of the study, the macaques were left potatoes and corn on the beach. One macaque discovered that she could wash potatoes in
water to get rid of the sand and make them more pleasant to eat. Within days, other macaques were washing their potatoes and within months, the behaviour had extended to all adjacent colonies, including those on other islands (who had no contact with monkeys on other islands). It’s interesting that the young were the first to learn and the older monkeys were always the slowest. Maturana and Varela (1987, p 201) call these behaviours that have become stable through generations, “cultural behavior”.

Another way of looking at change and culture is through a definition given by Bohm and Edwards (1991, p 168) in the context of society:

We have a society, and we have a culture - these are really two aspects of the same thing. The society is the link of relationships, of institutions, of stable structures set up to work together. Culture is the shared meaning behind it; without culture the society couldn’t exist.

In particular, Bohm and Edwards (1991, p 169) suggest that the most important thing is not to have a culture that defends its assumptions when evidence is given that those assumptions may be false. In organisations, we often speak of culture as being the most difficult to change. No wonder it’s so difficult, if first of all, we cannot always know how it has been acquired, and secondly, it seems to automatically continue on with new occupants as they enter an organisation, even though they have not necessarily been ‘trained’ into these behaviours. And once in an organisation, we so resiliently defend our unspoken assumptions.

Intuitively, I feel that our practices need to recognise the uncertainty of change, the difficulty of prediction and the lack of a complete understanding of change. However, the rhetoric is that we want change, with many public promises of rapid and complete change - even though our behaviours are not congruent with the required change. Any major change will require a transformation through a shift in mind set, cultural change, new systems, collaboration and new human resource practices. How do we do this when changing environments by their very nature, continuously produce conflict, realignments within organisations, new power struggles, new political imperatives, clashes between old and new paradigms and people acting out their needs? We have an abundance of change management theories, but we don’t seem to be able to apply them very well, in practice. Invisible and unspoken feelings and practices get in the way.
Change is influenced by the way we view the world. We may need to “walk the razor’s edge” between the extremes of “representationalism (objectivism) and solipsism (idealism)” (Maturana & Varela, 1987, p 241). We need to see the historical regularities in the world, as well as how our views and what we see, are a reflection of ourselves. In other words, we cannot see independent of ourselves. We need to be both describers and observers, so that we can coexist with others with a “mixture of regularity and mutability, [and a] combination of solidity and shifting sand, [which] is so typical of human experience” (Maturana & Varela, 1987, p 241). Our interactions do depend on history and it’s effective action that results in effective action. In accepting this interpretation, it’s imperative that our organisations start to focus constructively on effective actions.

Change cannot be effective when the pain and grief is too great. Brian Lewis\(^\text{25}\) identifies a formula for change:

\[
A + B + C + E > D
\]

Where:
- \(A\) = dissatisfaction with status quo
- \(B\) = the shared vision of the future which will be better
- \(C\) = critical knowledge of the first action steps
- \(E\) = resources available to support the change
- \(D\) = pain and grief associated with the change (which may not be known until after the event!).

If this formula was used within organisations, I’m sure that we would have quite different change processes. We need to see that “as human beings we have only the world which we create with others - whether we like them or not” (Maturana & Varela, 1987, p 246).

I have experienced how difficult it is to create change within my own family. I was taking a teenage son to Weight Watchers and initially, everything went well. Then his weight started to creep back on. I was worried and spoke to the lecturer\(^\text{26}\). She said that obese people need to feel disgusted with themselves to be motivated to make the commitment to lose weight. It was when she was 12 kilos overweight that she felt disgusted enough to commit herself to the regular regime of eating control. Others feel disgusted when they are 60 kilos overweight. It varies for everyone.

\(^{26}\)Conversation with Weight Watchers lecturer, recorded in Diary 10.5.95.
Similarly, with alcoholism. An alcoholic is more likely to seek change when he/she hits ‘rock bottom’. Reaching the bottom can create a “spell of panic which provides a favorable moment for change, but not a moment at which change is inevitable” (Bateson, 1972, p 330). Each time an alcoholic reaches ‘rock bottom’, he/she may be very open to change. “The attempt to change the alcoholic in a period between such moments of panic is unlikely to succeed” (Bateson, 1972, p 330).

Such situations lead me to wonder about our commitment to change in organisations. Do we need to feel ‘disgusted’ or at ‘rock bottom’ with the way we work together and with the waste of time and resources at work, before we commit ourselves to real (not perceived) change and adopt a culture of learning and improvement? A complex situation, as every one at work must have a different level of ‘disgust’ or ‘rock bottom’. And can we recognise that point of ‘rock bottom’, when people will be open to change? I’m sure that within organisations, we often miss the right moment for change, as we wait for decisions to be made, approvals to be granted and stakeholders to agree.

Another view of change is provided by Cairnes (1994, p 21), who says that the way to change is not through the “linear, rational, machine-based models” frequently used within organisations and business schools. But that the way to transformational change is through attuning to the reality of a fluid universe where “openness to the environment, awareness of interconnected systems, attunement to complex relationship webs and an understanding of and ability to facilitate process are the keys to success” (Cairnes, 1994, p 21). She suggests that for those who are ready to change, there are three key questions that help group processes: 1) what actually happened and what did you perceive? 2) how do you feel about it? and 3) what are you going to do about it?

Despite the many ways of looking at change, from whether we believe we are all doing the best that we can, to whether we change when we feel disgusted, or we can’t see what we are doing wrong, or we need to facilitate change processes - perhaps I am really saying underneath it all, that we must allow for diversity and movement\textsuperscript{27}. We can’t all do it in one way, or at the same time, or even do the same thing. If most people separate life from work,

\textsuperscript{27} See Appendix 5 for extract from Diary, that refers to these issues.

M Staron 1999  \textit{A Personal Perspective on Organisations}
then there must be even less motivation to change and cope in organisations than there is in ‘life’.

Today, as we verge on the 21st Century, work has become more comfortable but not more fulfilling. It’s still a separate compartment in life - something you tolerate in exchange for ‘real’ living in the time left over from doing your job, getting to your job, and recovering from your job! Work today drives an unhealthy wedge into the very core of our life. The time has come to heal it. (Biddulph, 1994, 135)

It’s when I work with people from other organisations or other units within my own organisation, that I realise how much diversity we keep out of our lives. It’s when I ask other people that I meet who are far removed from my world of work, what’s important to them and what do they value, that I am reminded of how much diversity there is and how we can be oblivious to it at work. We seem to have little respect for each others individuality or enjoyment of the diversity of human nature. We unconsciously surround ourselves with ‘like minds’. I must admit, it’s very pleasant and easy to work with.

Why can’t most organisations allow for diversity, personal needs and beliefs? We need to start integrating into the way we work, the principles of interdependence and independence, and non-exclusion and non-isolation. However, since so many people want to work in the opposite way, we will need to increase our own understanding of ourselves and our personal motives. Managing complexity will require a high degree of consensus (Dimitrov & Kopra, 1996). Unfortunately, the more we need it, the harder it seems to be to obtain it. To reach consensus, we will need to care for each other. However, there is a lack of a desire to really ‘share and care’ in many of our organisations. The political and economic imperatives override these issues and actions frequently demonstrate little care for individuals. People under pressure or in personal crises due to actions happening out of their immediate control, such as restructuring and loss of jobs, often revert to ‘base’ behaviour.

From my observations of these issues as a practitioner and researcher in organisations and analysis/reflection in my Diary, the theory-in-use that emerges is that if we increase our understanding of ourselves, our motives and ways of gaining consensus, we can increasingly make room for spirituality in organisations. We need to get better at placing people in positions best suited to their personal needs and belief systems, as well as their capabilities. And we may need to change our perceptions of organisations and construct new models in
new contexts, that make room for not only systems and structures, but also us and our consciousness.
CHAPTER 6  SPIRITUALITY:
Perceptions and Understanding

A very personal thing
What is spirituality within an organisation?
Spiritual practices within organisations
The need for interconnectedness
Why can't we see what we are doing wrong?
But what do I really want to research and understand?
A VERY PERSONAL THING

Some of the critical questions we are avoiding within organisations, revolve around how we both balance and keep the tension alive between: planning and 'going with the flow'; tasks and relationships; systemic and operational approaches; reality and perceptions; beliefs and practices; learning and training; head and heart. Amongst all these areas, the most difficult to discuss or allow space for in many organisations, is the 'heart'. However, putting the heart into an organisation makes room for many things, such as the space for support and understanding, creativity, unplanned and intuitive processes and our being. This, I believe, is the centre of spirituality (or love) within organisations.

What do organisations need?
Intellect and action?
Or a blend of spirituality and rationality.
Fuzziness and linearity

What is spirituality?
I know that it's not an add-on,
It's us seeing things as they really are
Being who we really are

And bringing our thinking, feeling and seeing
As well as our knowing and doing into the organisation.

The need for spirituality is now being recognised by many as a critical need within our organisations.

The key question for today's managers and leaders are no longer issues of task and structures but are questions of spirit. .... The usual issues of productivity, organization, finances, costs, profits, and so forth are of course still with us - and will remain as critical as ever. And remaining with us also will be our concerns about the humanness and health of the organization, including things like culture, communications, relationships, and morale. (Hawley, 1993, p 11)

What concerns me is that many people talk about spirituality as if it is something outside of themselves and when they are at work, remain disconnected to their own spirituality. I strongly believe that the only way to put spirituality back into organisations is to open up to
the spirituality within ourselves. It’s a very personal thing and can’t be an add on. It’s the spirituality within everyone that creates the spirituality within an organisation - it can’t be imposed on us, or dictated to us by anyone. It comes from our own personal spiritual practices.

I originally thought that the solution was to have spiritual leaders, as well as operational and strategic leaders. I am now aware that this would not be a solution, as it needs to come from within us. Imposed spirituality would never work within an organisation, the same as imposed learning or imposed leadership never works. It’s part of everyone. Cairnes (1994, p 66) found that when she helped people integrate their spirituality into their professional lives, they became more powerful. I believe that if we concentrated on our own learning and spiritual development at the pace that is right for us, the energy and vibration level of the organisation would rise and it would become a healthier and more productive place to be in.

WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY WITHIN AN ORGANISATION?

The current agenda within organisations has been described by Hawley (1993, p 12) as consisting of four overlapping agendas: the head agenda (intellectual); the heart agenda (feelings); the body agenda (wellness); and now the spirit agenda (deep in the inner self). When he speaks of spirituality, he is not speaking of religion, which he defines as a “set of beliefs, rituals, and ceremonies to help you progress along the path”, whilst spirituality is “a state, beyond the senses .... [and involves] inquiry into true Self” Hawley (1993, p 4).

Everyone has their own interpretation of what spirituality is. In forums that I have been in, where we have been asked to describe what spirituality means to us, every answer has been different. For example, descriptions have included28:

- being in touch with universal truths;
- being in touch with the sacredness of life;
- being egoless and seeing the interconnectedness of all things;
- a combination of the intellectual and emotional self;

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28 Discussion at residential for postgraduate students, University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury, April 1995, recorded in Diary.

M Staron 1999  A Personal Perspective on Organisations
- it's the art of living;
- it's what I've forgotten to remember;
- it's my space for "being at home";
- seeking the unknown.

I believe that spirituality is about my own being, my own practices, the impact I have on others, and my own beliefs about 'spirit'. It's not about the formal structures of religion, but more about a personal philosophy, practice and way of life. Perhaps all I can do is present my own personal perspective about spirituality and try to create some kind of shared understanding with others.

I find it difficult to precisely define my own meaning of 'spirit' or 'spirituality'. My view of spirituality has changed over the years. Some years ago I focused on getting in touch with myself, 'really seeing' things, trying to understand the interconnectedness of all life and being ego-less and non-judgmental. Now I see spirituality more as connecting to and honouring 'spirit' in the way I think, do and be. I try to live my spiritual beliefs in my practices in the workplace, but I don't always succeed.

Dimitrov, Kuhn-White and Woog (1996, p 28) define spirituality as "the search for meaning in ways that allows expression of our capacity for mystery, ethics, aesthetics, harmony and love". The Macquarie Dictionary (1998, pp 2043 - 2044) adds another dimension when it defines spirit as "the principle of conscious life, originally identified with the breath; the vital principle in man, animating the body or mediating between body and soul; the incorporeal part of man" and defines spirituality as "the quality or fact of being spiritual" i.e., "relating to the spirit or soul as distinguished from the physical nature".

**SPIRITUAL PRACTICES IN ORGANISATIONS**

An intellectual understanding of spirituality, alone, will not make a difference. Intellectual knowing is different to spiritual knowing. What matters is practising the understanding and knowing. In my own meditation groups and in my Research Learning Group, we have come to understand that the practice is the spiritual in organisations\(^29\). Sharing our wisdom and any

\(^29\) Discussion in Research Learning Group, recorded in Diary 3.5.96.
gifts that we have, helps us in our own spiritual growth and is a major way of practicing spirituality within organisations. ‘Giving’ of ourselves, no matter how small by each and every one of us within an organisation, will have a major impact within the organisation. This relates to systems concepts, in that:

Changes in small places ... create large-system changes, not because they build one upon the other, but because they share in the unbroken wholeness that has united them all along. Our activities in one part of the whole create non-local causes that emerge far from us. (Wheatley, 1994, p 42)

Or to put another way, “since every autopoietic system is a unity of many interdependencies, when one dimension in the system is changed, the whole organism undergoes correlative changes in many dimensions at the same time” (Maturana & Varela, 1987, p 116). This is created not through the impact of changes in the environment, but because of the “encounters between organism and environment which are operationally independent” (Maturana & Varela, 1987p 116).

Spirituality primarily involves the way we work and the way we relate to ourselves and others within organisations. It involves thinking of each other, including our leaders, in a loving way and having loyalty and respect for each other. When we relate to each other in a loving way, it exemplifies true learning, development and change. It needs to be an unspoken part of our work environment - it needs to just be. Policy statements and lists of spiritual values will never work. It’s us bringing our own spirituality to work and not leaving it at home. It’s having space for spiritual development at work. It’s about all of us being spiritual, as well as operational and strategic. Of blending these things together and not continuously saying ‘yes I know that it’s important, but let’s get on with the real job’. I suspect that if most of us haven’t been able to identify and live by our beliefs and be honest and humane, it will not be easy to bring spirituality into an organisation. It’s about just being, i.e., being really in touch with ourselves and not imposing our own fears and needs onto others. When discussing this with a Critical Research Friend, Ian Mills, we examined the place of understanding in organisations and how it can be the foundation of spirituality within organisations. When we understand, we ‘stand-under’, i.e., support each other. “We see the truth of something directly, without any barriers of words, prejudices or motives” (Krishnamurti in Lutyens, 1954, p 198).
But all of our humanness will continue to get in the way. The reinforcement of the way we act and behaviour within organisations, directly destroys spirituality and love. We are frequently ego-driven and need control and power over others. “Our ego has the tendency to get ... in the way of our rational decision-making, and our non-acceptance of reality encourages us to close our systems and move towards entropy” (Cairnes, 1994, p 66). Or as Fromm (1957, pp 130 - 131) puts it:

If our whole social and economic organization is based on each one seeking his own advantage, if it is governed by the principle of egotism tempered only by the ethical principles of fairness, how can one do business, how can one act within the framework of existing society and at the same time practice love? ... The principle underlying capitalistic society and the principle of love are incompatible.

Is there room for spirituality in organisations where the prime motive is profit, or keeping political masters happy, or positioning ourselves to be noticed or promoted by our leaders? We would have to change the definition of what organisations are. To open organisations to the kind of practices that will raise our levels of consciousness, we will need to consciously blend within ourselves intuitiveness and logic, creativity and practicality, beliefs and practices, compassion and truthfulness, rational and fuzzy logic processes.

If more and more people are recognising that spirituality is the most significant thing missing in organisations, then the organisational paradigms within which we operate must change.

The ideal is not moving from one paradigm to another but moving to a stage where we no longer need paradigms. Life without dominant paradigms is exciting, alive and relevant. It helps us stay in tune with reality as it changes, rather than imposing our own brand of static rationality over a fluid world. (Cairnes, 1994, p 93)

The kind of learning that is required is personal. Personal learning would become the basis for organisational change and learning. As I observed and reflected on in my Diary, many organisations find this difficult to do and become more and more impersonal as they struggle with restructuring, downsizing and cost cutting measures.

THE NEED FOR INTERCONNECTEDNESS

One morning I was meditating and quietly holding a flower I had just picked and I felt it cry. I have never quite recovered from this. I thought about how we are all connected to one another
- I know this intellectually, but still can’t experience it as part of my day to day life. I’ve often read about interconnectedness in spiritual development books and now see it emerging in popular books on organisational development, systems thinking and the new science, which are turning old knowledge and wisdom into a language that most of us can understand.

Fundamentally, I believe that the basic need within organisations is to see and understand this interconnectedness with each other.

Nothing exists independently of others even for a moment .... At sea we can watch the arising of a wave, see it grow big, diminish and cease to be. We think of it as an individual wave, but we know that the water composing it is changing all the time and that it is in fact inseparable from the sea. Only the motion is real. It should not be thought that the universe any more than the wave in analogy, is wholly unreal. In a sense, everything exists, but our perceptions lie in giving us an impression of individual objects. (Blofeld, 1970, p 48)

I know that I (and I’m sure many others) don’t truly understand our inter-connectedness or live it. However, I believe that it’s about tapping into the energy flow that we all are and that connects us all together. Even though it’s not important to everyone, the view as expressed by Gotama, the Buddha (in Wills, 1995), is very important to me:

As a net is made up of a series of ties, so everything in this world is connected by a series of ties. If anyone thinks that the mesh of a net is an independent, isolated thing, he is mistaken. It is called a net because it is made up of a series of interconnected meshes, and each mesh has its place and responsibility in relation to other meshes.

As I’ve learnt in my meditation groups, we do not learn about interconnectedness in traditional ways, in the classroom or by reading. We learn through spiritual ways, such as meditation, prayer or being of service to others. There seems little room for this in our western organisations. So, the potential for raising the level of spirituality within organisations through connecting to higher levels of energy and living our interconnectedness, seems limited to me, at this point in time.

I know that I find it easier to develop my own spiritual or mystical practices away from work, in quiet moments such as meditation, when I seek to attain a state of well being, peace and connection to universal wisdom. I assume that this is the way it is for many people. What worries me is how difficult it is to experience these things within everyday life, particularly organisational life and not just in meditative, quiet moments or loving environments. A real
challenge and dilemma for us in this competitive and materialistic world that we live in and one that I often focus on through the feminist perspective that I adopt during my research.

However, it seems that once our awareness levels are raised, this does impact on how we are within organisations.

An expanded state often begins to disintegrate when we try to interact with those in normal consciousness, or resume living in a competitive world. However, even if we fall back to what we perceive as ordinary awareness, the mystical experience has forever changed our idea of our limits. (Redfield & Adrienne, 1995, p 113)

**WHY CAN'T WE SEE WHAT WE ARE DOING WRONG?**

It's so easy to see the failings of others, or to see how others need to change or what the solutions are for their problems - but we don't see it for ourselves. Is this the same for organisations? Outsiders can see the malfunctions within organisations, but we can't see it within the organisation. Why? Is this one of the greatest ills within organisations, and in fact universally? My view is that, spiritually, it's our ego and expectations that get in the way. Is this what we have to learn to move beyond within ourselves, within organisations? Since there is never a simple solution to a complex problem, I have to acknowledge that there must be more to it than this.

Argyris and Schon (1974, p viii) describe the issue as the need for us to understand our 'theories-in-use'. These are the theories that govern our actions and they may or may not be compatible with how we would describe our behaviour in certain circumstance, which are our espoused theories (Argyris & Schon, 1974). We may not be conscious of this incompatibility. Throughout this research, I became more conscious of both my espoused theories and theories-in-use, and have looked for contradictions between the two. It's an interesting contradiction that I believe in practicing egolessness and non judgmental ways of being, yet I regularly do the opposite - just as I've been doing in this thesis. I get very confused by this clash of practice and values. I believe that it's our intellectual understanding that lulls us into a position of thinking that our practices are congruent with our theories-in-use. This contradiction often occurs at work. I'm required to give judgments, provide performance

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30 'Theories-in-use' are described in more detail on pages 64 – 65.

M Staron 1999  A Personal Perspective on Organisations
feedback to staff, make decisions and give opinions. This is very painful when trying to practice egoless and non-judgmental ways. And at the same time, being very conscious of my human needs - sometimes enjoying gossip and speculation, having expectations, judging without always having sufficient information, commenting on another’s failing, which I'm sure is to boost up my own ego. Yet on the other hand, I am probably doing what we all need to be doing within organisations, i.e., critically reflect. “All human beings..... need to become competent in taking action and simultaneously reflecting on this action to learn from it” (Argyris & Schon, 1974, p 4). However, our reflections are often limiting, no matter how hard we try to see the ‘new’ or the other point of view. Philosophically, Bergson (1992, p 137) suggests that our minds constantly seek to limit our perceptions, because of the constant effort of the mind to limit its horizon, to turn away from what it has a material interest in not seeing. Before philosophizing one must live; and life demands that we put on blinders, that we look neither to the right, nor to the left nor behind us, but straight ahead in the direction we have to go. Our knowledge, far from being made up of a gradual association of simple elements, is the effect of a sudden dissociation: from the immensely vast field of our virtual knowledge, we have selected, in order to make it into actual knowledge, everything which concerns our action upon things; we have neglected the rest. The brain seems to have been constructed with a view to this work of selection.

As well as perceiving selectively, Bergson (1992) also suggests that we cannot see the new until we understand the old. In his words, “the human mind is so constructed that it cannot begin to understand the new until it has done everything in its power to relate it to the old” (p 108).

Bateson (1972, p 429) considers that our inability to see new and different things, is a result of our “self-corrective systems”, i.e., we self-correct against disturbances. If we can’t understand or accept a disturbance, we will ‘hide it’ from ourselves. We will self-correct, so that we only see information which reinforces our existing perceptions.

Disturbing information can be framed like a pearl so that it doesn’t make a nuisance of itself; and this will be done, according to the understanding of the system itself of what would be a nuisance. This too - the premise regarding what would cause disturbance - is something which is learned and then becomes perpetuated or conserved. (Bateson, 1972, p 429)
No wonder organisations are so resistant to change. We keep learning those things that will reinforce the status quo. As I reflect and feel confused and disheartened, I sometimes lose hope. I often wonder what to do. Do I keep trying? Leave society? Take a demotion? Leave the organisation? Organisations are so inhumane.

As Morgan (1986, p 274) says, “whether by design or by default, organizations do often have a large negative impact on our world”. This has certainly been my experience and it’s often the focus on my reflections in my Diary.

**BUT WHAT DO I REALLY WANT TO RESEARCH AND UNDERSTAND?**

As I reflected and wrote in my Diary about organisational and family issues, I kept on being disturbed by not having a really clear idea of what I wanted to research in depth. However, “an explorer can never know what he is exploring until it has been explored” (Bateson, 1972, p xvi). So I decided to keep on writing in my Diary; perhaps in another years time all would be clear to me.

I discussed this dilemma with my supervisor, Judy Pinn. She gave me confidence in the qualitative research process that I was going through and observed that a number of methodologies were emerging.

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31 Feedback from Judy Pinn, recorded in Diary 10.5.95.
CHAPTER 7 RESEARCH APPROACH:
Matching Research Methodologies to Organisational Experiences

Research paradigms
Key aspects of my methodology
Qualitative research approach
A feminist perspective
Heuristic approach
Human inquiry
Participant/observer method
Fuzzy logic
Diary writing
Grounded theory methodology
Validity and reliability
Evolving processes
RESEARCH PARADIGMS

In examining research paradigms I turned to the work of Robottom and Hart (1993, p 7), who identify three options for inquiry among the paradigms, of postpositivism, interpretivism (constructivism) and critical theory. Of these three, I believe that I can select the interpretivism (constructivism) paradigm as the one most closely describing the paradigm within which I researched. This paradigm states that "reality exists only within the context of a mental framework or construct" (Robottom & Hart, 1993, p 9).

When examining this paradigm, I came across "slight shades of meaning" (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p 83) and moved towards the constructivist paradigm, as distinct from the interpretivist paradigm, "Constructivism, at least in the social sciences, is of more recent vintage than interpretivist thinking ..." (Schwandt, 1998, p 235) and even though it’s defined in a variety of ways, there is a common focus on multiple perspectives and reality as constructed by the researcher and subject.

Constructivism is the theory that for any single event or situation there are multiple perceptions of reality all of which have validity” (Schriver, 1998, p 139).

Constructivists are deeply committed to the contrary view [to that of objectivity], that what we take to be objective knowledge and truth is the result of perspective. Knowledge and truth are created, not discovered by mind. (Schwandt, 1998, p 236)

Or as described in more detail by Denzin and Lincoln (1998, p 27):

The constructivist paradigm assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and subject create understanding), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures. Findings are usually presented in terms of the criteria of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin). Terms such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability replace usual positivist criteria of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity.

This was the reality through which I chose to research. I viewed my research through my own mental framework, underpinned by a humanist/spiritual perspective. My interpretation was influenced subjectively by my values and purposes and throughout the research, I made my
own meaning. In doing this, knowledge can be forever problematic and everchanging (Robottom & Hart, 1993) and I continuously experienced this during my research.

Robottom and Hart (1993) and Guba and Lincoln (1989), identify hermeneutics as an appropriate methodology within the constructivism paradigm, but this was not one that I chose to use. Hermeneutics is a way of interpreting and making meaning of our research with others and re-checking our own interpretation against those meanings. However, my focus was primarily (but not exclusively) on my own interpretation of events and consequently, heuristics and grounded theory emerged as more appropriate to my approach. In addition, methods such as diary writing and being a participant/observer flowed out of this approach.

Since the methodologies are emergent and not predetermined in constructivism, many may see this paradigm as problematic (Robottom & Hart, 1993). And as an inquirer working within this paradigm, I aimed “for internal rather than external validity” (Robottom & Hart, 1993, p 10). All I can do is acknowledge that this is so and that my thesis is read within this context.

**KEY ASPECTS OF MY METHODOLOGY**

My research process has focused on understanding why our espoused organisational theories don’t work and why we experience what we experience within large organisations. As I uncovered issues, I kept searching for what lay underneath, the invisible and the unknown. I couldn’t find many answers within organisational theory. So I searched for what was within myself, in an attempt to try and understand what might be within others. Following this, I was then able to go back to theories and literature and form new understanding and meaning of my experience. This involved forming a very strong link between doing, thinking and being and I explored this extensively in my Diary.

My methodologies embraced four key aspects (see Figure 6) which together form the essence of a thesis: ontology; epistemology; methodology and expression. Ontology is about “how things are”; epistemology is about “how we can know something (or perhaps nothing) about the matter” and “in the natural history of the living human being, ontology and epistemology cannot be separated” (Bateson, 1972, pp 313 - 314). So, in both my research processes and in
<table>
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<tr>
<th>ONTOLOGY</th>
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<th>METHODOLOGY</th>
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<td>This represents my belief in self, human nature and spirituality and their interconnectedness. We (and everything around us) are in a constant state of fluidity, so the nature of reality as we perceive it, also changes constantly.</td>
<td>I am trying to make the connection between how I then think and know. It involves learning about learning and reflecting on how my knowing is constructed.</td>
<td>I need to ‘find out’, through ways that are congruent with fluidity and reflection, thereby enabling me to be more responsive to the moment. I did this through methods such as diary writing and being a participant/observer.</td>
<td>I am trying to express this through the thesis written as an emergent process, linking heart, voice, mind and being.</td>
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Figure 6: Key Aspects of My Methodology

researching how it is for me within organisations, I couldn’t separate ontology from epistemology. Bateson (1972, p 314) describes it in the following way:

His (commonly unconscious) beliefs about what sort of world it is will determine how he sees it and acts within it, and his ways of perceiving and acting will determine his beliefs about its nature. The living man is thus bound within a net of epistemological and ontological premises which - regardless of ultimate truth or falsity - become partially self-validating for him.

Interrelated with ontology and epistemology, are the methodological approaches we use within organisations to ‘find out’. We usually do this in our research and in our organisations through plans and measuring outputs. However, in keeping with my ontological and epistemological position, I chose a non-planned, heuristic and non-linear approach. This impacts on the form of expression I use. Expression is usually verbal, intellectual and linear, but there needs to be room for a wider variety of expression within organisations and to bring the heart as well as the intellect into organisations, expressing this in an emergent way.

As we do this, we need to work towards congruence, which involves a consciousness of all four aspects, with some degree of harmony, balance and tension between them all. I believe that I have been able to bring all four aspects together in this thesis, interrelated and intertwined, as they are in real life. We need to do this within our research, as well as within our organisations and to learn to braid together praxis (theory and action) and poesis (imagination and soul). I have attempted to do this within a qualitative research framework.
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

 Strauss and Corbin (1990, p 17) define qualitative research as

 any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification. It can refer to research about persons’ lives, stories, behavior, but also about organizational functioning, social movements, or interactional relationships.

 A similar definition is provided by Van Maanen (1983, p 9):

 It is at best an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less occurring phenomena in the social world.

 This form of research enabled me to delve deeper and more personally into the complexity, uncertainty and continual movement that I was experiencing within organisations. The danger I faced was one of overinterpretation i.e., “reading more into things than reason permits” or underinterpretation i.e., “less into them than it demands” (Geertz, 1993, p 16). I have probably done both - I certainly touched on topics such as philosophy and economic rationalism and without exploring them deeply, moved on; at other times I have repeatedly interpreted organisational behaviour as being ego and power driven. What was driving me was the need to keep exploring, to keep searching and to keep uncovering the things that were ‘unspeakable’ within my organisational experience.

 But of what use was my research? Strauss and Corbin (1990, pp 21 - 22) identify a range of uses of qualitative research findings and from these, I selected the need to inform practices within organisations, as the most appropriate to my findings. Strauss and Corbin (1990) also raise the issue of different approaches that we can use in qualitative research:

 1. researchers can present accurate descriptions and not ‘contaminate’ data with interpretation, to
 2. researchers who select and interpret data, in order to present a more detached conceptualisation of that data, to
3. others who focus on *building theory* to explain the reality of their data and to provide a framework for action.

I would position myself across the second and third approaches to qualitative research.

**A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE**

I needed methodologies that would support me in how I wanted to research. In defining methodology, I turned to an explanation by Popkewitz (1990, pp 51 - 52):

> Methodology .... is concerned with the relations of the various parts of study with the production of findings. Methodology is concerned with the moral order (the rules, values, and priorities given to social conditions and individual action) presupposed in the practices of science. It is the study of what is defined as legitimate knowledge and how that knowledge is obtained and ordered.

I believed that I would obtain ‘legitimate knowledge’ by combining subjectivity and objectivity, and getting in touch with my own ways of knowing. I did this through a feminist research perspective. Reinharz (1992, p 4) stresses it’s not a “woman’s way of knowing” but that there are “women’s ways of knowing”. To understand this better, I turned to the work of Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986). The descriptions given by Belenky et al (1986) about ‘women’s ways of knowing’, touched a deep chord in me and I became immersed in their descriptions. I had experienced so much understanding and knowing through my feelings and emotions during my life, but I had primarily focused on reason and logic at work. It was during the early stages of my research, that I started feeling the dissonance.

As I look back, I can see that frequently during my life, I was silent in the presence of ‘authority’. I thought, felt and often intuitively knew ‘the solutions’, as time was to prove. But I lacked the confidence to speak out. I fluctuated between the “received knower” and the “subjectivist” (Belenky et al, 1986). I had both a ‘gut knowingness’ and relied on the word of authority. Studies may indicate that it’s one or the other, but I feel that I did both. I often felt shaky and ‘voiceless’ and bowed to the voice of authority. With a lack of self confidence, I started this research journey looking for objective, external answers and solutions to problems within organisations. I found it impossible to proceed along this path for long and I turned
inward to my own, subjective knowing. As one women said in the Belenky et al (1986, p 222) study, "I live within myself. I know only through myself". This knowing takes time to develop, as "women must find their own words to make meaning of their experiences" (Belenky et al, 1986, p 203). As I did this, I moved consciously towards what Belenky et al (1986, p 141) describes as 'constructed knowing':

Constructivists seek to stretch the boundaries of their consciousness - by making the unconscious conscious, by consulting and listening to the self, by voicing the unsaid, by listening to others and staying alert to all the currents and undercurrents of life about them, by imaging themselves inside the new poem or person or idea that they want to come to know and understand. Constructivists become passionate knowers, knowers who enter into a union with that which is to be known.

I remained in touch with my own emotions and feelings, trying to understand what organisational experience meant for me personally. At the same time, I tried to view these experiences from an external point of view. I applied reason and intellect to understanding. I tried to understand both my own knowing and the knowing of others around me. In this way I tried to combine a subjective and objective knowing.

As I immersed myself in researching my experiences at work in these ways, i.e., woman’s ways, my methodology gradually unfolded. As I sat in the chaos of organisations and the invisible and unspoken, I discovered that I needed a flowing, unplanned, non-linear methodology, which would match my experiences within organisations. Such a methodology would keep allowing insights to emerge, to be ‘tested’, to influence the way I worked, and then allow ‘new’ insights to emerge.

I followed my intuition as to what was most appropriate for me to research and record. It involved my dream about how organisations could be, bringing my own spirituality into both my work and my research, linking family to organisational learning, identifying what I was learning from my projects at work and trusting my intuition. It involved the known, as well as the unknown and unnamable.

Initially during my research, my reading was spasmodic and my concentration was mainly on reflection, analysis and writing in my Diary. "Intuition and a nonsystematic approach to reading are cognitive/emotional processes that feel like feminist innovations to those who engage in them because they defy main stream definitions of how one should do scholarly
work or science" (Reinharz, 1992, p 232). My research could be described as a process of
"Studying Unplanned Personal Experience" (Reinharz, 1992, p 234); the impulse to undertake
this type of methodology "does not stem from opportunism or exhibitionism but rather from
the desire to eradicate the distinction between the researcher and the researched" (p 234).
There are a number of ways to conduct such research.

Some feminist researchers start with their own experiences, analyze it, and do not
collect data. Others start with their experiences, are troubled by it, and then collect
other data to compare with their experience. Yet others intend to study other people’s
experience, but in the process recognize that they are part of the group studied and use
this identification to deepen the study. (Reinharz, 1992, p 235)

All these ways relate in some way, to how I undertook my research. Even though not
undertaking specifically feminist research, i.e., research by women for women, I was able to
align myself with a feminist perspective to research. I started with my own experience, wrote
about that experience, studied other people’s experiences in relation to mine and recognised
that I was part of (and not separate to) the groups that I was examining. I wrote about what I
really thought. For me, this was a novel experience. I’ve never seen myself as a writer. What I
was good at was conceptualising and summarising what others thought. In groups, I usually
thought and stayed silent. My Diary was forcing me to articulate my thoughts in writing. At
times I found it embarrassing to put my inner most thoughts down on paper. I felt quite
vulnerable. What would people think? Would they laugh at me or ridicule my views? I
eventually came to an understanding and acceptance that no matter what I wrote or how I
wrote it, I needed to accept that others may see it differently. Sometimes people will agree,
others times they will not. So it remained important to me to be true to myself and work at
having the courage to say how I saw things.

This feeling of vulnerability is well expressed by Krieger (1991). She was writing a
manuscript, determined to write in the first person. However, she found it much easier to
write with “we” or “one”. In the end she discovered that she had to discard 80% of her writing
because she felt that she was not present enough, or not directly present. I quote from Krieger
(1991, pp 31-32) at length because her experience and point of view is directly relevant to the
way I have undertaken and presented my research:

I was used to writing in the first person in my autobiographical work, and I was now
arguing for acknowledgment of the self in social science. Why, then, could I not speak
of myself without running from my own statements? Why did I have such a hard time being direct? Who was I fooling: Who was I concerned with letting down? Why did I think it was others rather than myself? Why did I always think it a lie when people said they wrote for themselves? If I were only writing for myself, I would not write. Who did I write for? Why did I insist on writing for people who did not want to hear me? Why did I find it so hard to speak?

These are questions from my internal voice. My inner voice is full of questions, fears, and negative judgment about myself. My outer voice, on the other hand, speaks in statements. It makes cautious assertions that hide my inner uncertainties. The effort it takes to fashion the outer voice tells me that the central issue for me in both my autobiographical and social science writing is the issue of hiding. In both forms, I seek out the perfect word or the correct idea, trying to make a smooth surface that will not betray me, that will not reveal who I am: a person who may not be acceptable. At the same time, I wish to be revealed; I want others to know me. But I want them to know me in a specific way. I want them not to judge me and find me lacking.

There is a lot of pressure to be conventional both at work and in the academic world, which adds to our feelings of vulnerability. We are particularly vulnerable to external judgments.

I think that it is possible that people in their writing are especially vulnerable to external judgments, or to judgments felt to be external in their source. Academics have particular ways of hiding in their writing in order to avoid such judgments, especially when the judgments may be negative, and all these ways have consequences for the individual’s sense of self. As social scientists, we use standard terms and depersonalised voices that camouflage the self and make it conventional in order to make it acceptable and in order to communicate our thoughts. Yet curiously, these very attempts at protection exacerbate vulnerability problems. For if a work that was supposed to protect the self is criticized by an outsider, the greatest threat is not that the work will be found faulty, but that the self behind the work will be exposed. The original sin - the individual who was so dutifully covered up with proper language, theory, and good form - will then no longer be safe from harm. (Krieger, 1991, p 34)

At times I needed the support of my supervisors to just keep going, particularly when I thought that I was writing a subjective lot of material that could not at all be useful to anyone or appropriate for a thesis. I was filled with self doubts about my abilities and about what I was writing. That everyone already knows it and why should I repeat it? Having read about Krieger (1991) and her struggles with her writing and her research, I better understood these feelings and that in a research context, it was scholastically sound and acceptable to be honest and disclose the self - despite the fact that it may make some feel uncomfortable or question it academically.
Only when we stop detaching self from work will we be able to acknowledge such strength and to foster it, and will we be able to work against the surface conformity that stifles many of our ideas. This conformity, which, to a large extent, is a product of desires for collective protection, causes us to make our work look like that of others. It leaves us with a less rich sense of experience than we might be able to obtain were our individual perspectives discussed and valued. It also encourages a fear of who we are as individuals, and of who we might be, were we to speak in more self-connected ways. Speaking from the self, as exposed as it may feel, seems to me a very worthwhile endeavor. (Krieger, 1991, p 38)

Perhaps I was just reflecting what so many women feel. Belenky et al (1986, p 228) state that many women are “consumed with self-doubt ...[and have a] sense of themselves as inadequate knowers”. Other people usually seem so self assured, but I am sure they too are filled with doubts. What does this mean for executives in large organisations? They must have doubts. Most, certainly, are not prepared to admit it. It seems to be thought a sign of weakness in our culture. Have they lost touch with their own feelings and vulnerabilities, of putting themselves close to their hearts and souls? Also, staff often don’t want to see the doubts, the humanness. They want strong, infallible leaders, who are always right. An illusion and need that most of us have. However, as expressed by Torbert (1991, p 163), vulnerability can be very powerful, through the power of speaking truthfully in public:

A truth spoken - made public - has a nonmanipulative power that others can choose to interpret as attractive or inscrutable or repelling. ... The effort toward speaking truly is an effort to penetrate behind one’s unthinking interpretations, evaluations, and attributions to one’s first principles, actual feelings, ‘pure’ perceptions, and questions.

Throughout the research process, I wanted to learn to see things ‘differently’. “The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new lands, but in seeing with new eyes” (Proust, 1871-1922, source unknown). Over time my research enabled me to do this. My thesis shows how my thinking and views evolved over time.

*Time for another poem*

*But I have a problem*
*Writing about methods and techniques*
*Justifying what I have done and how I have done it,*
*It seems to destroy my creativity*

*So I'll stay with the prose*
*And leave the poem for another time.*
HEURISTIC APPROACH

In the early stages of my research, I concentrated on what I wanted to research, not how I would research. In a state of great confusion, I had moved from a study of paradigms to a study of an individual’s (i.e., my own) experiences within an organisation - what I thought, did and experienced within organisations. I examined how my personal philosophies and family experiences impacted on what I experienced within organisations. I decided not to construct and analyse an organisational situation through a specially-formed research group, but to consciously observe on a daily basis the experiences that I had as an individual or member of various groups.

I’m conscious that I filtered what I saw through my own ‘window of the world’. I concentrated on those things that were important to me, that I felt touched my heart and would sustain me through a number of years of research. I was unable to define what ‘touched my heart’ prior to my research. It occurred unexpectedly, intuitively and emotionally. It was unplanned and had more to do with the spiritual and psychological, than with the head and intellect - even though it can be researched and written about in an intellectual and scholastic manner. As Hill (1997, p 1) said, “it is more important to be clear about and follow your ‘passion to inquire’ than a ‘methodology’, i.e., methodology must serve your passion and not your passion be subservient to a methodology”.

Consequently, my research journey was very much a heuristic one. Heuristics has been defined by Douglass and Moustakas (1985, p 39) as “a passionate and discerning personal involvement in problem solving, an effort to know the essence of some aspect of life through the internal pathways of the self”. They go on to say:

Heuristic research is a search for the discovery of meaning and essence in significant human experience. It requires a subjective process of reflecting, exploring, sifting, and elucidating the nature of the phenomenon under investigation. Its ultimate purpose is to cast light on a focused problem, question or theme. ....

Through exhaustive self-search, dialogues with others, and creative depictions of experience, a comprehensive knowledge is generated, beginning as a series of subjective musings and developing into a systematic and definitive exposition. (p 40)
I was continuously involved in groups within and across organisations, so I was able to observe, reflect and analyse situations and experiences; I was able to discuss and create dialogue about these experiences in a number of groups. I intuitively followed the heuristic approach of immersing myself in issues, exploring them through self analysis and then exploring them through the experience of others. Often I found that through disclosing my views, beliefs and experiences, others were prepared to disclose some of their inner most thoughts and experiences. Heuristics gave me a conceptual framework where “the object is not to prove or disprove the influence of one thing or another, but rather to discover the nature of the problem or phenomenon itself and to explicate it as it exists in human experience” (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p 42). Heuristics suited my topic and search because it is concerned with meanings, not measurements; with essence, not appearance; with quality, not quantity; with experience, not behavior. Formal hypotheses play no part, though the researcher may have initial beliefs or convictions regarding the theme or question, based on intuition and on prior knowledge and experience. (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p 42)

Douglass and Moustakas (1985, pp 45-53) describe a three-phase heuristic model of immersion, acquisition and realization, which I applied in the following manner.

1. During the *immersion* phase, I was completely immersed in the puzzling themes and questions that were emerging. My whole world certainly did centre around my research. “Immersion of this kind is more impulsive than deliberate, more a wandering than a goal, more a way of being than a method of doing” (p 48).

2. I entered the *acquisition* phase some months after commencing the research, when it became clear to me that I was researching my experience within organisations on a daily basis through reflection and analysis. This was when I became totally dedicated to keeping a Diary as a way of acquiring my data, in a methodology that was congruent with my topic. “In heuristics, data are broadly construed to mean that which extend understanding of or add richness to the knowing of the phenomenon in question” (p 48).

3. Towards the end of my research, I entered the *realization* phase, when the whole is compiled from the fragments and disparate elements, following the search for meaning and essence. Such realization is the quest for synthesis, not a summary or recapitulation. “In synthesis, the searcher is challenged to generate a new reality, a new monolithic significance that embodies the essence of the heuristic truth” (p 52). Out of my research,
the ‘whole’ that I synthesised were models of organisational and individual complexity, underpinned by a personal set of guiding principles.

Even though overall, I am able to describe the three phases in a logical manner, not all emerged in such a ‘neat and tidy’ manner. I actually had the three phases occurring within each phase as well. For example, during the initial phase of immersion, I collected data and some realization occurred. This was followed by continual ‘mini-cycles’ of immersion, acquisition and realization throughout the research process. With each round of clarity that occurred, further issue were then able to emerge, followed by the need to again search for new insights and realization.

Heuristics helped me find what Ulrich (1994, p 21) defines as “problem-relevant questions and problem-relevant knowledge”. Heuristics therefore supported me in staying with the questions throughout the research process, perhaps more so than other methodologies could have. As Ulrich (1994, p 21) says:

finding relevant questions for identifying and unfolding problems is the basic task with which the currently prevailing theory of knowledge and model of “rational” inquiry (logical empiricism, Critical Rationalism, analytical philosophy) cannot deal.

The fact that I was unable to clearly identify the problem within organisations helped maintain my research. According to Ulrich (1994, p 22) if you can completely define a problem, you no longer have a genuine problem:

A complete definition of the problem is possible only when one already knows how to bound and understand the problem-relevant system..., that is, when one knows the “solution” to all the crucial questions. In real-world inquiry and design, problems are never “given” like textbook exercises; rather, they must be discovered, unfolded, and defined by someone who is prepared to consider them as problems. Accordingly, by heuristics we understand not a collection of prototypical problem solutions or problem-solving techniques, but rather the art of making “the problem” the problem.

Consequently, the heuristics approach supports a critical reflective approach. In addition, heuristics is not a theoretical approach “i.e., it cannot theoretically justify its own basic concepts and its own normative content but rather must remain self-reflective with respect to its theoretically problematic and practically normative character” (Ulrich, 1994, p 23).
The issue then arises as to whether one attempts to judge without error. To do so would need what Ulrich (1994, p 19) describes as a “critical heuristics approach”. However, such effort at judging without error “presupposes implicit or explicit standards or norms against which to judge something” (Ulrich, 1994, p 19). This was an area I chose not to enter into and I consciously remained at the self-reflective, personal level, perhaps at times, judging with error.

**HUMAN INQUIRY**

Early on in my research, I had become aware that I needed a ‘holonocentric’ methodology. At the time, this allowed me to commence exploring all the areas that I was interested in and to place myself at the centre of my research. Whitehead (in McNeill, 1988, p 37) expresses this as the need to keep the living “I” in the centre of our educational discussions. In discussing Whitehead’s work, McNeill (1988, p 37) says:

> It is vital that we acknowledge the force of the individual consciousness in interpersonal relationships. It is this force that makes possible, and its acknowledgment that encourages, a one-to-one relationship between persons that is fundamental to human inquiry.

Human inquiry is about “people exploring and making sense of human action and experiences” (Reason & Rowan, 1981, p xi). According to Reason and Rowan (1981, p xiii), it combines both objectivity and subjectivity, which they call “objectively subjective”. The methodological processes that I used, supported me in my human inquiry and many processes emerged, when appropriate. As Reason and Rowan (1981, p xviii) say, “this is what human inquiry is all about”. My human inquiry process was most closely shared by my Research Learning Group and a number of Research Critical Friends.

**Research Learning Group**

From the beginning, I regularly submitted my Diary and information about my research progress to members of my Research Learning Group. As mentioned in Chapter 1, we met every six weeks for three hours, for over three years. The Group strongly supported me in my

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32 For details on ‘holonocentric’ methodology, refer to page 45 - 46.
33 For details on ‘placing myself at the centre of my research’, refer to pages 49 – 50.

M Staron 1999  *A Personal Perspective on Organisations*
approach, particularly in the personal and subjective approach that I was taking. Group members empathised with my work, in that they all had similar experiences to myself within organisations, at one time or another. I received feedback on areas that I could pursue in more depth, issues that required a clearer explanation and alternative approaches that I could take. At times we discussed in depth organisational issues that I raised and I was advised of literature that may be relevant to my research. For around a year, we included a consultant in our meetings to guide us in our work, to keep us informed of research approaches and to advise us of literature relevant to our work. We also sought research advice from others. For example, for one of our meetings, a university research consultant met with us to discuss methodology.

The Research Learning Group was extremely important to me. We discussed and reflected on our research, our learning, our fears and our vulnerability as researchers. My Group believed in what I was doing and how I was doing it. They also understood why I was doing it. Therefore, they helped me to persevere to the end, to remain vulnerable and to 'expose' myself, my ideas and my experiences. I took my deepest fears and uncertainties to them. Through their listening and understanding, I became more sure of myself and more in touch with myself. I needed all the support that I could get to undertake and complete my research. My Research Learning Group, as well as my supervisors, provided this for me.

I recorded all of my discussions with the Group in my Diary and it influenced the approach that I took. Much of what we discussed is woven into this thesis and I have at times, footnoted some of the discussions.

**Critical Research Friends**

I also sought feedback from a number of people within my own organisation and within universities. These people advised me on both organisational issues and research approaches, and I discussed my research findings with them, especially in the early stages of my work. This helped me bring some objectivity to my research, as I sometimes wanted to test my own subjective views against the views of others. Occasionally I used these Research Friends as philosophical advisers. Our discourse ranged from the meaning of life to the meaning of our experiences within organisations. These Research Friends validated my approach for me and helped me understand a variety of perspectives on organisations. In particular, it was due to
regular discourse with these Friends, that I discovered that there were few solutions and mainly questions. I particularly discussed spiritual matters with them and my interpretation of events in organisations. I was a participant/observer within the organisation that I worked in and both my Research Learning Group and Research Critical Friends supported me in pursuing my research rigorously.

**PARTICIPANT/OBSERVER METHOD**

Being a participant/observer, gave me the choice of researching purely as a participant, or purely as an observer, or anywhere inbetween. (Reinharz, 1992). Most of my research was somewhere in the middle of this continuum. As a middle manager in a large education and training organisation, I was an every-day participant in the organisation, in its issues and in its processes. At the same time, I endeavoured to constantly observe myself and those around me. In doing this, a work member/researcher role conflict can emerge. Reinharz (1984) describes this conflict as one that emerges from the obvious benefits of having access to an insider role (which she believes is the distinctive value of being a participant/observer), but which then results in you losing the benefit of the outsider stance. As an outsider, it's possible that staff may speak more freely to you than they might if you are, as I was during this research, a manager within the organisation. On the other hand, as a manager, I frequently participated in meetings and work groups that I would not have had access to as an 'outsider'.

As a participant/observer, you can proceed openly, with all knowing about your research, or you can participate/observe in disguise, i.e., with no one knowing. Some may say that if your researcher role is hidden, it raises "questionable ethics of deceiving the other participants" (Merriam, 1988, p 92). I researched discreetly, in that not everyone knew I was researching my organisational experiences. Some people that I worked with on an every day basis were aware of my research and at times I discussed my research findings with various groups within the organisation, seeking feedback. However, I would say that my research was more discreet than open. I did not 'conceal' my research role, it just didn't seem appropriate to mention it to everyone that I came in touch with, as the main focus in my research was on my own personal perspective. I researched my own views and my own reactions and observation, not theirs. Perhaps this argument is just semantics, in that I do at times suggest reasons for the behaviour of others within organisations and my own reactions were often the result of the impact of interactions with others. However, I have never intentionally deceived the people I
have come into contact within organisations; it was just that at the time, I saw, thought and observed with the main intent being on discovering my own voice. My reflection often occurred away from the workplace, while I was writing in my Diary. I did not know in advance what the outcome would be, of researching in this way.

Merriam (1988, p 87) defines participant/observer method as “collecting data from observing phenomena of interest” in the field, which provides direct from the participant, a description of what is observed. She cites Kiddler’s four requirements, that make observation a research tool, as distinct from casual observation: 1) observation serves a formulated research purpose; 2) it is planned deliberately; 3) it is recorded systematically; and 4) it is subjected to checks and controls on validity and reliability.

I did not deliberately plan what I would observe, but chose to observe as much as I could. I was able to observe crises and difficulties within the organisation on a daily basis and I was able to observe the impact of change on individuals and listen to their views. The difficulty and disadvantage of being a complete participant, was that I could not attempt to always be an impartial observer and I readily acknowledge the emotional involvement and bias that I must have.

The way I undertook this method can be criticised as being subjective, centred in the self and dependent on my own analysis. However, the strength of my approach is that it does give a different point of view to the standard process when one is an impartial or semi-impartial observer. I became a participant/observer because I believed that some important things had to be said, especially about the invisible and un-named, and that they could only be seen and said by a complete participant in the process. Being a participant/observer gave me the opportunity for “direct contact with the subject of study, for natural interaction rather than instruments as the source of data, [and] for access to nonverbal communication” (Reinharz, 1984, p 132). According to Reinharz (1984), the value of being a participant/observer, in contrast to the usual methods of survey research projects, are: personal relevance; an introductory formulation of the problem; familiarisation with pertinent literature; and following your own imagination and needs. Guba and Lincoln (1981, p 212) state that for studying social groups there is no substitute for the participant/observer, as
laboratories ... do not, and cannot, take account of complex human behaviours and interactions. In situations where motives, attitudes, beliefs, and values direct much, if not most of human activity, the most sophisticated instrumentation we possess is still the careful observer - the human being who can watch, see, listen ... question, probe, and finally analyze and organize his direct experience.

I was able to meet my own personal needs throughout the research process. Reinharz (1984, p 141) asks the question: “Do we formulate research projects from questions or needs?” Many researchers appear to painstakingly try to be objective and avoid a personal approach to research. However, “research without personal commitment lacks an essential source of motivation and is likely to be deprived of experiential insight” (Reinharz, 1984, p 142). I could not have undertaken my research in any other way, even though I acknowledge that in taking such a personal interest in my research, it can “unwittingly translate into taking sides and thereby coloring perception” (Reinharz, 1984, p 142). She describes one way that I could have worked my way around this, which would be by becoming a member of a group in the organisation that I had an aversion to. In some ways I have done this, in that I have worked across many groups in the organisation. However, I did not consciously undertake to completely analyse my sources of aversion. Also, this would have become a new research project for me. All that I can hope for is that I have been honest enough during the thesis process to identify my own personal needs, biases and interpretations.

This tension between the personal and the professional and the fusing of the two when one is a participant/observer, is raised by Belenky et al (1986, p 226), who cites the approach taken by anthropologist Mary Catherine Bateson:

These resonances between the personal and the professional are the source of both insight and error. You avoid mistakes and distortions not so much by trying to build a wall between the observer and the observed as by observing the observer - observing yourself - as well, and bringing the personal issues into consciousness.

Belenky et al (1986, p 226) describe this kind of methodology as a “sophisticated form of connected knowing”, which allows us to use our own reactions “to formulate hypotheses about the other participants’ reactions”.

Figures 7 and 8 describe my participant/observer method. I researched in a cyclical fashion. This process has been described by Singleton and Straits (1999, p 37) as follows:
The process of science [i.e., knowing and understanding the world around us]... is
cyclical, with theories leading to predictions to observations (or research), and
observations to generalisations that have implications for theory.

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Figure 7: Participant/Observer Method – Research Closure

In one sense, it was an inward spiralling participant/observer approach (see Figure 7), in that I
researched some questions, then reached some ‘closure’, which led to further questions. I
followed this cycle until final ‘closure’ was reached, i.e., until I had completed this research
project.

In another sense, my research spiralled ‘outwards’ (see Figure 8), because my questions
became broader and over time, I opened up my ‘window on the world’, taking a broader and
deeper look at issues - which continues on, past the closure of this research project.
During my research, I was unable to split observation from ‘irrelevant’ feelings, in that the relation between experience and examination is the crux of the participant observation method. One person both participates and observes by being simultaneously on two levels, in other words, by communication and metacommunicating. (Reinharz, 1992, p 153)

I operated on these two levels. Firstly, by participating and observing in a number of everyday situations, which involved: discussions with individuals and groups; reading; interviews; participation in and observation of project teams; consultancies; conducting workshops; trialing new approaches to work practices, group learning and facilitation; personal experiences within a blended family and using these experiences to inform my organisational experiences; and sometimes, by taking a risk and seeing what would happen. Secondly, by recording my experiences and observations in a Diary. In this way, I deepened and extended my analysis, reflection and insights. Even thought this often led to confusion, uncertainty and questioning, it brought me in touch with my feelings, as well as my intellect. I frequently thought of my dream and wondered how this related to the reality that I perceived.
There were a number of recurring questions, with a kind of hierarchy around them; For example the first question can be subsumed into the fourth question.

- Why is it so difficult to change when we seem to know what to do?
- Why can’t we establish a focus on the personal and internal as the key focus for change?
- Why can’t we create the futures we desire so much?
- What is the relationship between self, human nature and organisations?
- What is the invisible and unspoken, and how do we make them visible, spoken and heard?
- Why don’t our actions match our values?
- Why don’t our needs and practices match our models and theories?

Sometimes, I would come to a stand still, seeing something differently or reaching some new conclusion. When I commenced re-searching, the same questions would often re-emerge and sometimes, new questions would surface.

Towards the end of the process, I reached a kind of calmness, an acceptance of the way things are. Not always seen or understood, but nevertheless seen as more complex and real, as always needing to be questioned. Not always needing to know. Knowing that not only the intellect, but also the heart, spirit and soul is vital within an organisation. Knowing that often only the intellect emerges and that it’s the heart, spirit and soul that’s invisible and unspoken. And if it’s missing, then a feeling of emptiness emerges within organisations. Being a participant/observer enabled me to look deep inside myself and to come to this realisation. Being a participant/observer meant that I was different at the end of the process, than I had been at the beginning. As described by Wax (in Reinharz, 1992, p 127), “I had become a different person, a person who could never go back to being what she had been before”.

M Staron 1999   A Personal Perspective on Organisations
What I had initially expected as a research output did not eventuate, i.e., through a key question, finding key solutions to the difficulties we experience in organisational life. But I do hope that my findings are seen as “a source of fruitful ideas and illuminating perspectives” (Krieger, 1991, p 47). For example, I have:

1. Researched using unplanned processes, by not determining methods and outcomes in advance and allowing them to emerge, for example, the participant/observer and diary method. In this way, I have proved to myself that it can be done and I hope that I can also be used as an effective non-linear process within organisations.
2. Questioned the assumptions behind organisational theories.
3. Examined aspects of complexity within organisations and designed models to demonstrate this - a paradox in itself, as organisations are in continual movement and models are very static.
4. Identified that there are no universal questions and no key solutions, only further questions.
5. Identified major unspoken and invisible themes within organisations.
6. Accepted the paradoxes.

Accepting paradoxes has been a great challenge. Wilden (1980, p 475) states that “we must be able to transcend a discourse in which paradox is insoluble in order to deal with a discourse in which paradox is inescapable, and therefore essential”.

To achieve these outcomes, I needed to create space in my research for methodology that incorporated fuzzy logic.

**Fuzzy Logic**

As we work within the chaos and uncertainty that we are now experiencing within organisations, we need more than our traditional planning and research approaches can offer. The greater the degree of unpredictability that we are experiencing, the more our traditional methods fail us and the more we pretend that we are in control. We need greater flexibility and a greater number of alternatives from which to draw. One such alternative is fuzzy logic.

\[34\] Thoughts about not looking for solutions, recorded in Diary 28.9.95 (see Appendix 6 for extract from Diary).
The theory of fuzzy logic was introduced in 1965 by Zadeh. He mathematically computed with words instead of numbers, in order to represent vagueness which he saw as more realistic than precision. Zadeh (1996, p 3) says:

There is a much more deep-seated tradition - especially in Western cultures - of according much more respect to numbers than words. The rationale for this tradition is that the use of numbers is a concomitant of better understanding, greater mastery and higher precision. The brilliant successes of numerical methods in science and engineering provide an irrefutable basis for this precision.

Nevertheless, as is true of every tradition, a point is reached where the underpinnings of a tradition cease to be beyond questions. This is the point of departure for what may be called *Computing With Words*, or CW for short.

The role model for computing with words is the human ability to reason and make decisions without the use of numbers. A case in point is the problem of parking a car. A human can park without making any measurements.

Interest in fuzzy logic did not spread until the usefulness of its application to engineering became obvious. We must now look to applying it to social systems and to research. This will allow us to logically draw "inferences from information which is imprecise, incomplete, uncertain or partially true" (Zadeh, 1998, pers. com.). In social systems and research, the use of imprecise words and descriptions aren't usually tolerated. It's a difficult predicament, where time or funds spent have to be accounted for, yet effort and outcomes are often unmeasurable. (We just pretend to measure them). It's relevant and timely that the underpinnings of organisations and of research, and not just computing and engineering, be questioned.

Fuzzy logic fits into the new mindset of learning, discovery and creativity described by Smithson (1996, p 2), which includes: knowing you don't know as a necessary precondition for intentional learning or discovery; serendipity, by discovering one thing while investigation another; exploring ignorance, as it can lead to creativity and learning; using paradoxes and contradictions as sources of new insights and discoveries; being ignorant that something is believed to be impossible, as it may enable its accomplishment; fuzziness (or vagueness) as an important part of new theories or ideas, since it makes them flexible and prevents premature problem closure; and viewing mistakes, distortions, and errors positively, as it may lead to discoveries and novel ideas.
We need new mindsets such as these, to help us research and manage the paradoxes that are inherent in ourselves and our society, especially the need to be in control and the need to let go. Dimitrov and Kopra (1996, p 13) identify three main paradoxes in regard to social complexity:

1. Paradox of independency - our collective interdependence (between people and between people and their environment) provides individual independence with meaning.
2. Difference-similarity paradox - differences in interests and values are important, but they only have meaning because of the similarities that also exist, which provide a basis for group endeavour. “In other words, the differences are framed by the similarities, which depend on the differences for their meaning, and the similarities are formed by the difference, which depend on the similarities for their meaning”.
3. Paradox of self-knowledge - we can’t understand ourselves without understanding others; but at the same time, we can’t understand others without constantly trying to understand ourselves.

Managing and researching complexity means taking into account these innate paradoxes and their effects. These opposing and contradictory forces exist within and between all individuals and groups. As Dimitrov and Kopra (1996) explain, if we try to unravel these forces, we further paralyse individual and social actions. I’ve observed that both research and organisations are riddled with the mismanagement of paradoxes and the resultant paralysis. For example, we constantly segment and fragment functions in order to make them more manageable, but in doing so, we create more problems than we solve, through the ‘left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing’. We work with good intentions in mind, to achieve specified outcomes, but often the opposite outcome occurs. The more we try to define and measure our research and organisational outcomes, the more we lose the significance, learning and meaning of the changes that have occurred. We often reach consensus for maximum benefit for all, but find that individual needs aren’t taken care of and agreements are sabotaged. People within organisations will need to have a preparedness to act together, or an agreement to reach second order consensus.

35 Dimitrov and Kopra (1996, p 15) suggest that second order consensus or (consensus for seeking consensus) “needs not only a desire to search for meaning, but strong emotional factors (sharing and caring) to catalyse its emergence out of the chaos of dissent and disagreement, contradictions and conflict".
This can be expressed as a fuzzy composition of three major components: 1) willingness to engage in dialogue (communication); 2) deservengness of trust or confidence (trustworthiness); 3) ability to create options (creativity). (Dimitrov & Kopra, 1996, p 16)

I think we have to be reminded that fuzzy logic is not an excuse to act or think illogically, either in our research or in our organisations. Fuzzy logic involves very logical processes, dealing with imprecise information, that is not quantitatively based. Dimitrov and Kopra (1996) have expressed ‘preparedness to act together’ in a fuzzy formula. The formula is based on dialogue (D), trustworthiness (T), creativity (C) and preparedness to act together (P). They maintain that the higher the degree of D, T and C between people, the higher P will be. Such approaches help us, particularly when surfacing the invisible and unknown.

When seeking consensus according to such fuzzy logic rules, “stakeholders (i.e., participants) do not necessarily look for a ‘common ground’ in the form of full agreement” (Dimitrov & Kopra, 1996, p 15). To not require a change in interests, values and goals, which is a preliminary condition for seeking consensus, would paradoxically, require a fundamental change in our behaviour, attitude and skills (Dimitrov & Kopra, 1996, p 15). These new and ‘fuzzy’ ways would need to be acknowledged in, for example, job requirements, performance agreements and also in our research. We would need changing systems and a redefinition of both organisations and research. We have a long way to go, especially when unpredicted insights and actions will need to be free to emerge. Prerequisites such as goals and requirements would constrain the search and narrow the scope. “Spontaneity is an important characteristic of this process” (Dimitrov & Kopra, 1996, p 15). I feel quite excited when I think of the research and organisational possibilities this can open up; but I also react quite emotionally when I think of the difficulties of working in these ways. My experience in organisations is that people predominantly want structure and guidelines, want to come to work and not get too involved, and just get the job done - ‘please keep the complications away and just tell me what to do’.

To set few rigid goals would have to be one of the most challenging goals for both our research and our organisations, as it is fundamentally contrary to how they operate. It’s unbelievably difficult to match method to philosophy and vision. We need methods for chaos, not linearity and rationality, that surface the continual movement around us. Perhaps that’s why I have taken the approach that I have to research, as I wanted to see if anything would
emerge from matching research method to experience in organisations. My research experience (as in organisations) has been circular, non-linear and chaotic, involving rounds of learning and change; sitting in the confusion often without plans or pre-set structures and solutions. And in the end, seeing how it does get better, as we research and learn our way to new understanding and practices.

I have both an excited and defeatist attitude to the possibilities. How could whole organisations be turned around? Is the implementation of fuzzy logic in social systems just an ideal? Having watched or been involved in ways people operate within organisations, I don’t quite know how I am going to get there. Do I reach for an initial ideal, start the journey and then allow a new ideal to emerge that I again strive for? Is life just a never ending spiral upwards towards new levels of consciousness? As a good friend once said to me, ‘when you can do algebra, they then give you quadratic equations’. Can how I researched also be replicated in organisations, especially in the public sector and non-government organisations? One possibility is to free up a small motivated unit or group and give them a completely unrestrained environment (especially administratively), free to operate in any way they choose\(^{36}\). This would have to be a ‘special’ group, separate to all the other groups that are carrying on with ‘business as usual’. They would have to be supported by strong sponsors and access to resources. People would need to think completely outside of the ‘box’. Such an environment may never suit many people in our large bureaucratic organisations, but it needs to be available to those who would thrive on it and bring valued outcomes to themselves and their organisations.

When fuzzy logic is applied to the management of complexity and research, it requires a “positive appreciation of differences and a ‘celebration of the other’; unfortunately, the Western culture is ... more inclined to exercise an ‘enlightened suppression of the other’ ” (Dimitrov & Kpora, 1996, p 17). I particularly think the view of ‘enlightened suppression of the other’ is very appropriate to how many of our organisations operate. Therefore, transforming our organisations into new ways of being seems impossible when we look at the huge range of human needs and behaviours, much of which I have diarised during my research and have referred to in this thesis. The application of fuzzy logic brings huge

\(^{36}\) From discussion in a ‘think tank’, recorded in Diary, 12.4.96.
challenges with it, but also exciting potential. The question of why can’t we achieve the things we want, remains a vital question.

**DIARY WRITING**

The method that allowed me to bring together all of the issues that I was grappling with in my research, was diary writing. Diaries have always been a source of data collection in fields such as anthropology and in methodologies such as action research and grounded theory. In anthropology, I turned to Geertz’s (1993) reference to diaries as a way of collecting data in the field. He refers to Bronislaw Malinowski’s *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term.*

Apparently a scandal broke out when this *Diary* was published, as it revealed that Malinowski wrote in ways that were not complementary to the native people he was studying and brought into question his moral character. Geertz (1993, p 56) believed that the focus of the scandal missed the point and that the issue presented by the *Diary* was epistemological: “If we are going to cling - as, in my opinion, we must - to the injunction to see things from the native’s point of view, where are we when we can no longer claim some unique form of psychological closeness, a sort of transcultural identification, with our subjects?” Geertz (1993, p 57) goes on to say that the most appreciable way is to put the issue in terms of what psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut calls “experience-near” and “experience-distant” concepts:

An experience-near concept is, roughly, one that someone - a patient, a subject, in our case an informant - might himself naturally and effortlessly use to define what he or his fellows see, feel, think, imagine, and so on, and which he would readily understand when similarly applied by others. An experience-distant concept is one that specialists of one sort or another - an analyst, an experimenter, an ethnographer, even a priest or an ideologist - employ to forward their scientific, philosophical, or practical aims. “Love” is an experience-near concept, “object cathexis” is an experience-distant one.......Clearly, the matter is one of degree, not polar opposition - “fear” is experience-nearer than “phobia”.

My Diary enabled me to write about my own experience-near observations and reactions and to do this in the only way that it can be done, “spontaneously” and “colloquially”, with perhaps an illusion that I know best about my own experiences (Geertz, 1993, p 58). I also wrote of the impact of these experiences on others, i.e., experience-distant. Perhaps I cannot really perceive what others perceive, as suggested by Geertz (p 58), so I acknowledge this weakness in my research.
In the action research context, diaries have been defined as:

personal accounts (usually but not necessarily private) on a regular basis around topics of interest or concern. Diaries may contain observations, feelings, reactions, interpretations, reflections, hunches, hypotheses, and explanations. (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988, p 101)

In grounded theory methodology, they have been referred to as “nontechnical literature” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p 55) and can form the source of primary data. However, diaries may not be acceptable as the sole source of data collection. Therefore in addition to the Diary, I have been able to draw on what Strauss and Corbin (1990, p 55) describe as “technical literature”, which I have read as part of my professional work experience in the field of education and training, management and organisational development. In addition, I have supplemented this by a more formal literature search, which has informed this thesis.

I chose diary writing as my primary source of data collection because it enabled me to write regularly, personally, emotionally and intellectually. From the writing emerged interpretations and explanations that I could discuss with others. The Diary became my main data collecting source, in preference to interviews, document analysis or questionnaires. In doing this, I was relying on my own descriptions, which Van Maanan (1983, pp 9-10) describes as fundamental to data collection in qualitative studies:

Doing description is then the fundamental act of data collection in a qualitative study. But, the map cannot be considered the territory simply because the map is a reflexive product of the map maker’s invention. The map maker sees himself quite as much as he sees the territory. There are however better and worse maps and qualitative researchers seek to construct good ones by moving closer to the territory they study in the physical sense as well as in the intellectual sense by minimizing the use of such artificial distancing mechanisms as analytic labels, abstract hypothesis, and preformulated research strategies.

Critical reflections on both my work experiences and family life, were the main focus of my research. As described by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), I was able to follow the reflection process of analysing what I had experienced, interpreting it and explaining what happened to myself during the process. Through reflection, I was able to “analyse, synthesise, interpret, explain and draw conclusions” (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988, p 86).
An example of a research diary is one kept by Stanley (1994). The research diary is about her experiences from the time of her mother’s stroke to the time of her death, nineteen months later. She discusses her writing in the context of “narrative, lives and autobiographies”, stating that her principle concern is the “narration of lives” (p 133). My approach is similar to the approach described by Stanley (1994, p 145), in that the diary unfolds a narrative that is a “story told by structural and rhetorical means in which there is an unfolding, a development or progression, a denouement and/or conclusion”, i.e., a beginning, middle and an end. Such a narrative allows us to ‘tell a story’ - around a set of ontological problematics (what did all this mean, regarding my mother’s self, regarding myself, regarding selves and consciousness in general) with epistemological consequentiality (what did all this entail for how I, we, understand what it is to have knowledge about another person, about one’s self). (Stanley, 1994, p 142)

Following an analysis of critiques of this style of writing, Stanley (1994, p 133) argues that narrative is highly complex and its referential claims frequently exist to repair what is actually an awareness of ontological complexity and fragmentation; that experiential claims are no less but certainly no more problematic than other kinds of knowledge-claims; and that both narrative and ‘experience’ are suitable ground for analytical investigation.

She raises the issue of lack of referentiality during such a process as diary writing. As a result of this concern, she identifies the “need to establish ‘a point of view’ that is consonant with ‘the facts’ as seen from this point of view, because without this there were multiple disjunctures, ‘puzzles’ as I typically referred to them” (p 142).

Marshall and Rossman’s (1995) discussion of issues to do with writing narratives can, I believe, equally apply to diary writing. For example, they raise the criticism of the focus on the individual, rather than on the social context, but they do go on to say that similar to life histories, “seeks to understand sociological questions about groups, communities, and contexts through the individual’s lived experience” (Marshall and Rossman, 1995, p 87). They also raise the possibility of selective recall or the reinterpretation of past events.

However, in recognising difficulties such as these in this form of writing, it does not necessarily “entail rejecting the form or denying its very real interests and attractions, .....nor
should it entail dismissing its ability to provide analytically sharp, albeit experientially derived, theory” (Stanley, 1994, p 146).

I believe that my Diary is an authentic method to support the kind of research that I have undertaken, for the reasons outlined below.

1. It allowed me to write regularly.
2. I was able to write what I really wanted to write and as such, it was a personal record through which I gradually found my own voice.
3. I was able to write about things as they occurred, whether it was about interviews I had conducted or a book I had just read or about relationships within my blended family.
4. I discovered that repetitions gradually emerged; these repetitions helped highlight critical incidents or when a particular area may have been sufficiently explored. More importantly, with each repetition, a new insight developed or a new area emerged that needed to be researched.
5. Gradually, I was able to extend my understanding of ‘what was going on’ in organisations.
6. I was able to test my insights during conversations within organisations and then record the feedback in my Diary.

I regularly submitted my Diary to my supervisors and on occasions, to my Research Learning Group and Critical Research Friends. They gave me constant feedback on my data, highlighting what they saw as significant, as well as troublesome. I was also able to check with them that my work was both objective and subjective, and used thinking form as well as feeling form. The Diary gave me a rich source of data and a way of exploring the invisible and unknown in organisations, as well as the continual movement and complexity of organisational experiences. It also gave me a vehicle for making meaning of my experiences and in this way, creating knowledge. I was therefore able to base my thesis on this data.

**GROUNDED THEORY METHODOLOGY**

My methods such as the Research Learning Group, diary writing and being a participant/observer, underpinned by fuzzy logic methodology, resulted in the formation of theories, which emerged unexpectedly during my research. These theories were developed
through a grounded theory methodology, which can be defined as the “discovery of theory from data” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p 1). A theory “integrates pieces of information into a whole; it makes sense out of data; it summarizes what is known and offers a general explanation of the phenomenon under study” (Merriam, 1988, p 55). I grounded my theory in my work experience, using the data from my Diary. Such theory can be presented in “either a well-codified set of propositions or in a running theoretical discussion” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p 31). I chose the “discusisonal form of formulating theory” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p 32) as most relevant to my form of research. Through this form of research, I was able to see that theory becomes “quite rich, complex, and dense, and makes its fit and relevance easy to comprehend” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p 32).

In grounded theory methodology, it’s assumed that a specific research question will be formulated, which “is a statement that identifies the phenomenon to be studied” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p 38). However, as previously described, my questions about organisations kept changing through the heuristics approach that I took. Instead of one statement, I had a number of statements that grew and developed throughout my research. I believe that I maintained a grounded theory approach, since such theories can be pursued “as an ever-developing entity, not as a perfected product” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p 32).

The focus of grounded theory is to generate theory and not on the testing of that theory. Therefore, I did not need to ‘prove’ the theories that I developed or formulate methodologies to do so (Glaser, 1992, p 29). However, I did seek feedback from people that I worked with. From their responses, I sometimes modified my perspective and the conclusions that I drew.

I don’t believe that my research is in danger of only producing an “excellent description of fascination to all” (Glaser, 1992, p 29), but has also met his criteria of being theoretically sensitive. These sensitive insights usually come from personal experiences (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, Strauss & Corbin, 1990, Merriam, 1988) and need not be suppressed or seen as mere opinion. Sensitive insights also come from professional experience and analytic processes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and from one’s imagination, the experiences of others and existing theory (Merriam, 1988). I employed all these forms during my research.

In using grounded theory in daily situations, the theory requires 4 interrelated properties (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p 237).
1. The theory must fit the area to which it is applied - my theories have direct application to the organisational life that I experienced, which is the main area of my research.

2. It must be easily understood by laymen concerned with the area to which it is applied - my thesis is written in what I would call a ‘conversational’ style of expression and a number of people that have read my work-in-progress, have found it highly relevant and applicable to their experiences of working in organisations.

3. It must be general enough to be applied to a variety of daily situations occurring within the area to which it is applied - my theories come out of my daily experiences at work and are general enough to be applied within the ever-changing context of work.

4. Through the theory, the user develops partial control over the structure and process of daily situations as they change - in some ways I question this requirement, as having greater control can be an illusion. However, in seeing the overall complexity and being able to place ourselves within the discusssional theories and models I have developed, I believe that a greater understanding emerges for the user and consequently an enhanced attitude towards the impact of individuals within organisations.

The theoretical underpinnings that finally emerged in regard to the Models that I developed, were:

- a questioning of assumptions underlying current organisational theories;
- the development of a new set of assumptions for a whole-of-organisation theory of complexity;
- the recognition that human beings do not behave according to organisational theories or the plans that they (or others) put in place; and
- the need to be guided by principles, relevant to individuals and groups.

These research findings fit Strauss and Corbin’s (1990, p 29) description of theory, where concepts provide a way of interpreting data and where statements of relationships are also developed. This moves it out of mere description and towards the use of interpretation and themes to form conceptual schemes.

There is a requirement according to Strauss and Corbin (1990), for the data to be coded. In this area I didn’t adhere to their grounded theory methodology. Any attempt at classifying and
coding that I made didn’t appear to work for me. Alternatively, I relied on a heuristics approach and followed the principle of emergence. They suggest that if a researcher is having difficulty with placement of categories, then they need to rewrite or retell their story. However, if I had strictly followed their methodology as I understand it, I believe that my research outcome would have been quite different and perhaps less creative and intuitive. I was working with a basic contradiction - method implies classification, however I had decided that through this research process, I would search my way through experience and emergence of findings without a plan. In this way, “what was originally ‘hidden’ gradually ‘comes out’ and finally stands revealed” (Winter, 1987, p 44), i.e., the ‘emergence’ is the difference between the beginning and the end of my inquiry. I needed to prove to myself that it could be done. That it could be different to most working environments, where plans are imposed as prerequisites for outcomes, with an assumption that the beginning and end should be the same, i.e., as planned in advance.

Glaser and Strauss (1967, p 6) believe that grounded theory is “more successful than theories logically deduced from a priori assumptions”. What I have experienced is that the development of theory from the use of personally generated data (for example, from a Diary), when discussed with others, often leads to feelings of discomfort. It denies the illusion that we can be in control of our organisational experiences and reinforces the need to continually adjust to, and learn from, our environment. To change in fact, as our environments change. This is quite an uncomfortable experience for most. It surfaces the impact of relationships, processes and values, and questions the effectiveness of primarily leading our organisations through plans, tasks and outputs.

**VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

In researching in this way, i.e., “with understanding as the primary rationale for the investigation, the criteria for trusting the study are going to be different than if discovery of a law or testing a hypothesis is the study’s objective” (Merriam, 1988, p 166). Consequently, I have not undertaken to validate my research through the traditional methods of measurement and experiment. Instead,

we have to develop some notion of reality which gets away from the subject-object split - reality as either all out there, objective and therefore discoverable, or all in my
mind, subjective and ineffable. Schwartz and Ogilvy (1979, p. 53) argue that we can move away from notions of objectivity and subjectivity, by developing the notion of perspective [which] defines ‘a personal view from some distance’ and ‘suggests neither the universality of objectivity nor the personal bias of subjectivity’. (Reason & Rowan, 1981, p 241).

I have attempted to undertake such a perspective while being fully involved within an organisation, integrating my personal and ‘inside myself’ perspective with an external ‘helicopter’ perspective.

In working within the new paradigm of research, Reason and Rowan(1981, p 244) describe validity as lying “in the skills and sensitivities of the researcher, in how he or she uses herself as a knower, as an inquirer. Validity is more personal and interpersonal, rather than methodological”. To increase the validity of such an inquiry, Reason and Rowan (1981, pp 245 - 250) identify a number of processes which they refer to as “heuristic guides”:

- **Valid research rests above all on high-quality awareness on the part of the co-researchers.** This awareness is difficult to maintain, as it requires the researcher to constantly be thinking from a multiple perspective point of view. I did this from my own perspective, as well as attempting to step outside that experience. I focused on meditation and spiritual development as one way of developing my awareness. This aspect of validity is one that I have learnt my way through during the research process and it’s an ongoing process for me.

- **Such high-quality awareness can only be maintained if the co-researchers engage in some systematic method of personal and interpersonal development.** This requires a desire to look deep inside, be disturbed and stay on a path of increasing self-knowledge. I supported work colleagues on their paths of personal and interpersonal development, but did not have a systematic method for doing this. At times I engaged in this through some of the organisational programs I was involved in. However, in the main I focused on myself, knowing that as I changed, the relationships around me would also change. Within myself, my deep, disturbing demons were my fear of authority (instilled in me since childhood), my feeling of unworthiness and the belief that I had nothing new to contribute. We all have our own demons, but are usually not prepared to admit them.
- **Valid research cannot be conducted alone.** I did have around me in organisations, many people who both challenged my way of thinking and doing, or provided me with support. My supervisors and my Research Learning Group regularly checked my awareness and perspectives. Also my Critical Research Friends, challenged and confronted me.

- **The validity of research is much enhanced by the systematic use of feedback loops and by going round the research cycle several times.** As described in my participant/observer methodology, I undertook the research cycle several times. It was only after a number of cycles, that I was able to develop a variety of theories and models. And with each cycle, what I sometimes thought, changed significantly.

- **Valid research involves a subtle interplay between different forms of knowing.** There are many ways of knowing. My way of knowing has been through observation, intuition, meditation, reading, trialing different approaches, reflection, feedback and listening. My research did not extend to statistical data collection and analysis, formal interviewing or formal case study groups in organisations. I did not see these techniques as appropriate to my research.

- **Contradiction can be used systematically.** Frequently, contradictions gave me the impetus to keep researching. One in particular was vital at the beginning, as well as throughout my research. That was the contradiction between theory and practice. Fuzzy logic was a process that allowed me to work with these contradictions and make room for inclusion of both.

Reason and Rowan (1981, p 249 - 250) identify a final ‘heuristic guide’, which I am not conscious of having used to establish validity: “convergent and contextual validity can be used to enhance the validity of any particular piece of data”.

The way data is collected, impacts on validity. Tandon (1981, p 299) states “the data-collection process that is most relevant ..., determines its validity”. I used diary writing, and both myself and my supervisors saw this as the most relevant method for collection of my data. Guba and Lincoln (1981, p 212) specify that “to the extent that the observation is plausible and accountable in terms of human behaviour, it has the likelihood of being valid observation”. I believe that my observation was both plausible and accountable.
Related to validity is the concept of reliability. Reliability refers to "the extent to which one’s findings can be replicated ...[and] in a research design is based on the assumption that there is a single reality which if studied repeatedly will give the same results" (Merriam, 1988, p 171). Using this definition, I am not able to argue that my research is reliable, as it is based on my own perceptions and under conditions that could not be replicated, i.e., my behaviour as well as others is forever changing and the particular context and circumstances of change and pressure at the time of my research, cannot be repeated. Merriam’s (1988, p 170) view is that:

Qualitative research ... is not seeking to isolate laws of human behavior. Rather, it seeks to describe and explain the world as those in the world interpret it. Since there are many interpretations of what is happening, there is no benchmark by which one can take repeated measures and establish reliability in the traditional sense.

Therefore it is not possible for me to demonstrate reliability in the traditional sense. Guba and Lincoln (1981, p 213) suggest that "replicability of any given experience is less important in understanding human behaviour than is the recognisability of the description by those who lived the experience". Those who have read my work in progress have certainly ‘recognised’ the situations that I have described and the conclusions that I have drawn.

Many argue that by establishing validity, one establishes reliability at the same time. For example, Merriam (1988, pp 171 - 172) describes how in qualitative research, reliability and validity are inextricably linked and cites both Walker, who recognises that the material in qualitative research is open to ‘multiple interpretations’ and Guba and Lincoln who suggest the term ‘consistency’ or ‘dependability’, believing that instead of “demanding that outsiders get the same results, one wishes outsiders to concur that, given the data collected, the results make sense - they are consistent and dependable”.

Merriam (1988) describes a number of techniques that can be used to ensure that research results are dependable and of these, I used the following two techniques. First, the investigator’s position - where I, as the investigator, position myself clearly in terms of background, context and philosophy, so that the way the data is collected and the results obtained ‘make sense’ and are consistent. Second, an audit trail - where I provide a clear explanation of why I researched in a particular way and on what my decisions were based. The audit trail enables others to understand and follow what I have done.
Evolving Processes

It's funny how most of our insightful work occurs when we get 'stuck'. In writing this thesis, it's when I've been stuck that I had to think long and hard about what I wanted to say and eventually sat down and just wrote. As I look back over my work, I think that it's at these points that my reading becomes more personal and more interesting. It's about taking a risk, being vulnerable and saying how it is. I notice how each round of research and learning creates more in-depth understanding and new perceptions. My challenge will be to work out how to keep writing and show how my understanding evolved - without being boring, disjointed or simply irrelevantly repetitive.

This kind of process happens all the time in organisations. Unfortunately, it's seen as a waste of time by most people. In other words, I should have got it right first time. It's seen as going backwards and not forwards. We haven't got a grip at all on having rounds of re-searching, re-learning and change. “Change is always with us; that even in a minute fraction of time the frequency of occurring changes is beyond our ken” (Nyanaponika Thera, 1962, p 37). I feel that there are great shifts going on in the universe, and as organisations try to change to accommodate these shifts, people that resist and try to stay the same will suffer greatly - and not really understand why. If the environment is always changing, so must we. “Life is in a state of transition, never quite the same for one moment, constantly demanding a creative response.” (Smith, 1980, p 10).
CHAPTER 8     ORGANISATIONAL BEHAVIOURS:

Love, Listening and Spirituality

We need to change some of our most fundamental behaviours within organisations

Why can’t we listen to each other?

Moving away from industrial revolution practices

Organisations need self esteem and love

We often need to confront and criticise

Tell us what’s really happening

We may need to search in new places

Informing organisational learning through family/personal learning

Questioning our assumptions

What can we rely on when nothing stays the same?

Power issues are central to organisations

How do we stay calm and peaceful in the midst of chaos and confusion?

The need for control and attention
WE NEED TO CHANGE SOME OF OUR MOST FUNDAMENTAL BEHAVIOURS WITHIN ORGANISATIONS

When examining behaviours in organisations and developing theory grounded to explain our practice, we each identify from our own perspective, which behaviours are acceptable and which aren’t. “The success or failure of a behavior is always defined by the expectations that the observer specifies” (Maturana & Varela, 1987, p 138). My own expectations tend to centre around the personal and spiritual, whether at home, with my family or at work. No doubt this is why I look at organisational issues from this point of view and not an operational, technical or re-engineering point of view. So, from a feminist point of view, it’s the personal or spiritual experiences within organisations that have the greatest impact on me. To develop spirituality within organisations, we will have to open up our hearts, skills, resources and strategies to all - open and accessible. We will have to be aware of our need for power and stop withholding information or resources.

In reality a spiritual path is a path of renunciation, letting go, constantly dropping all we have built up around ourselves. This includes possessions, conditioned habits, ideas, beliefs, thinking patterns. (Ayya Khema, 1990, p 12)

We will have to change some of the most fundamental behaviours we see in organisations. But can we? Am I prepared to do this? Organisations feel very dysfunctional when only certain groups within them are learning, growing and changing - so too, do families.

As I was writing in my Diary, I realised that I was feeling very upset with someone in my family. I thought that it’s time to tell them what I really think of them, even if I then never talk to them again! As I was having this satisfying conversation in my mind, I thought of how such a conversation would achieve nothing except great distress and continued misunderstanding of each other. I also knew that simply telling someone doesn’t achieve much change. We have similar experiences at work. The situation reminded me of a particular time when I had to give feedback about a person’s work performance. No matter how gently I tried to say things, I was accused of being very unfair and hurtful. Perhaps I was. However on reflection, and looking past my hurt and upset at being ‘misunderstood’, it seems to me that people constantly project their own opinions of themselves onto what others say, causing
great disharmony. How do I mend such relationships in a large organisation? I don’t know. It certainly interferes with achieving organisational and personal goals.

The simple act of encouraging more open inquiry is often attacked by others as ‘intimidating.’ Those who do the attacking deal with their feelings about possibly being wrong by blaming the more open individual for arousing these feelings and upsetting them. (Argyris, 1990, p 184)

What did I learn from this? That not many people look at unpleasant or difficult situations and ask: ‘how did I contribute to this’? or ‘what do I now need to do differently’? or ‘what does this person mean and lets get some shared understanding’?

If most individuals and groups can’t ask these questions of themselves, then it’s almost impossible for organisations to do it. Application of learning organisation models will be difficult or impossible. It may be one reason why organisations are so resistant to learning. If organisations are going to learn their way through change, they need people who have developed high levels of maturity; however, most people in their personal lives seem to be striving to move from dependence to independence. Few seem to be moving to interdependence. Not many people appear to have a high level of consciousness of what is driving them - why they manipulate; why they are untruthful and not direct; why they handle their discomforts the way they do. It will be a huge struggle for organisations to move to levels of interdependence.

I believe that people who most clearly see the needs of others and the needs within organisations, are those who have struggled to see clearly inside themselves - who have taken, as Peck (1991) says, ‘the road less travelled’. Does this mean that organisations need to also take ‘the road less travelled’? In my observations, most people within organisations stick firmly to the usual path, the one they are most familiar with, while others may try to force them to shift. Taking the ‘road less travelled’ is both a practical and spiritual path for organisations. It involves ethical practices and selflessness. It involves trying new things and learning from mistakes. However, despite the rhetoric, many organisations are usually quite unforgiving about mistakes.

I now go back to the fanciful conversation I was having in my mind with a family member. As my thoughts rambled on, I perceived that I needed to grow to be a ‘better’ human being.
and not just do things better. I then wondered about the connection of this to organisations. How can organisations be better organisations, and not just do things better? In discussing these issues with my Critical Research Friends and Research Learning Group, I eventually realised that it's not about becoming ‘better’, but that it's about being in touch with ourselves and then the best action arises\(^{37}\). If we could heal our own lives by taking responsibility for changing ourselves internally (i.e., our own practices and attitudes), then perhaps we could also heal our own organisations.

We need to learn to become comfortable with each other. Those with technical and operational interests and skills usually feel quite uncomfortable with those with intuitive and strategic skills and approaches - and vice versa. Clashes frequently occur. Each can't really understand the other. Those who are operationally focused see others as wasting their time on tasks such as research, development of theories and evaluation. They say things like ‘it's nice if you have the luxury of time to think and do those things, but I want to do some real work, something I can see an immediate outcome for'. I find it very disturbing when so many people need to justify what they want to do in terms of criticising others.

The conclusion I draw is that when people feel very uncomfortable and are working in unknown territory, they unintentionally do lots of put downs, so that the discussion and work reverts back to familiar territory and something immediately applicable to the known. However, if we want to do things differently, we need to be true to ourselves and keep working at it - and something exciting may come out of it. It’s not an easy path to take. It needs vision, belief, courage and resilience.

Those with courage and understanding do change. For example\(^{38}\), I’ve heard people identify themselves as technocrats and explain how they did a particular job for many years, were highly skilled at it and knew what to expect in their job every day. Then traumatic changes came and the nature of their work dramatically changed. They now constantly learn new skills and new ways of working and go to work each day, not knowing what to expect. This is the way it is and this is the way they see it will always be.

\(^{37}\) Conversations recorded in Diary 14.5.95.

\(^{38}\) Example recorded in Diary 14.6.95.
From analysis and reflection in my Diary, the grounded theory that emerged for me, is that there are a number of ways that we could change our behaviours within organisations. These include:

- listening to each other;
- moving away from industrial revolution practices;
- providing a space for self esteem and love within organisations;
- confronting and criticising with humility;
- telling each other what’s really happening;
- searching in new places during times of shifts;
- informing organisational learning through personal and family learning;
- questioning our assumptions;
- relying on our agreements, when nothing stays the same;
- acknowledging power issues;
- staying calm and peaceful in the midst of chaos and confusion;

The following sections examine each of these behaviours.

**WHY CAN’T WE LISTEN TO EACH OTHER?**

Lack of listening seems to be one of the major barriers to growth and change within organisations. People continuously moan about communication issues - we never seem to improve or get our feedback processes right. I’ve seen very few leaders actually listen; they are always explaining or justifying their own point of view - talking at us, not with us. As expressed in the Tao Te Ching (in Man-Ho Kwok, Palmer & Ramsay, translators, 1993, p 115)

> The highest authority needs the basement as its base,  
> And the depths are the foundation of the heights.

> That is why rulers call themselves lonely,  
> like souls in a wilderness who have no home.  
> And, in doing so, don’t they see then  
> that their roots lie with the people?
It seems that the more senior people become in organisations, the less they listen. It’s well known that “Australian managers need much better ‘people skills’” (“Enterprising Nation”, 1995, p 25). What needs are they fulfilling, or what expert model are they trying to live up to, needing to know it all or believing that they know it all? I’m sure that in our own personal lives, we often don’t listen or communicate effectively, but there seems to be some kind of assumption in organisations that we will do it well. And just as difficult as not listening, is when we feel inhibited (either from within or by the way things are said to us) from saying what we really think directly to the person who is creating the discomfort; instead, we usually tell (in what feels a feeble and wimpish way) everyone else what we think. This is a most destructive way to behave and our organisations are full of it. Perhaps organisations need a lot more dialogue\(^{39}\), i.e., everyone having a say, going away, coming back together again to have a say and repeating the cycle, until we all agree (to agree or disagree). This kind of dialogue would be revolutionary in organisations. I wonder what would happen? It would certainly surface much of the invisible and unspoken.

**MOVING AWAY FROM INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION PRACTICES**

We are still trying to “apply the concepts of an outdated world view - the mechanistic world view of Cartesian-Newtonian science - to a reality that can no longer be understood in terms of these concepts” (Capra, 1983, p xviii). We need to move away from these mechanistic views to a holistic conception of reality. Schon (1995) describes these opposing views as seeing the manager as a technician, who applies to his/her situation at work, the principles and practices established in management science; or on the other hand, seeing management as a craft and an art, that cannot be reduced to rules and theories. The latter view has a longer history than the former view, but it’s the former view that has gained strength and popularity over time. As described by Schon (1995), this view of the manager as technician was particularly strengthened by the work of Frederick Taylor during the 1920’s. “Taylor treated work as a man/machine process which could be decomposed into measurable units of activity” (Schon, 1995, p 237). Tool design, human movement and processes could be studied and the ‘one best way’ could be identified. The manager was seen as a controller, decider of rewards and punishments and one who understood ways of yielding maximum productivity

\(^{39}\) For more information on dialogue, refer to pages 91 – 94.
and efficiency. This became embedded into the new schools of management, working in partnership with private and public industry.

What was once true only of industrial production has now become true of sales, personnel selection and training, budgeting and financial control, marketing, business policy, and strategic planning. Technical panaceas have appeared on the scene with clocklike regularity, old ones making way for the new. Value analysis, management by objectives, planning programming and budgeting, and zero-based budgeting are only a few of the better-known examples. Even the human relations movement, which had originated as a reaction against Taylorism, has tended increasingly to present itself as a body of techniques. (Schon, 1995, pp 238 - 239)

My own experience within a number of organisations reinforces my view that we are continuing to work and train in the old industrial revolution paradigm, where problems in the organisation are ‘solved’ by looking at the parts and training focuses on problem-solving and skills acquisition. The assumption is that this will lead to improved work performance and increased skills - and so more inputs and outputs will be provided for the ‘machinery’ of the organisation.

Despite this scenario, Schon (1995, p 239) points out that many managers “have remained persistently aware of important areas of practice which fall outside the bounds of technical rationality” and gives the following examples. First of all, managers have an increasing awareness of their work environment, i.e., of its complexity, uncertainty, instability and uniqueness. In such an environment, rules and techniques don’t work, there is little time for analysis and not all information is available or understood. New and unknown situations occur regularly and managers are aware that something beyond technique is required; they refer to the need for “intuition” (Schon, 1995, p 239). Secondly, managers have an awareness that “ordinary professional work, crucially important to effective performance ... cannot [always] be reduced to technique ... [and] that even management technique rests on a foundation of nonrational, intuitive artistry” (Schon, 1995, p 239). This artistry (or art of management) enables managers to develop intuitive judgment and skill, i.e., “knowing-in-practice” and it also enables managers to reflect and see any incongruence between their actions and intuitive understanding (Schon, 1995, p 241). The organisation itself, through its “learning system” (i.e., its behavioural pattern and organisational structures), can support or inhibit a manager’s reflection-in-action and consequently its art of management (Schon, 1995, p 242).
There is quite a lot of difficulty working intuitively in organisations. For example, when I am in visioning and futures groups, I get very frustrated. I have tried to work out why I feel this frustration. Maybe my own needs aren’t being met. But it’s also about the difficulty of envisioning future possibilities, because when we try to do this, we work from current frameworks and boundaries that may not be entirely appropriate. It seems that “as much vision as you have put into it, just so much will you find; and reasoning will not have made you go one step beyond what you had perceived in the first place” (Bergson, 1992, p 140).

So how can we go beyond what we have perceived in the first place? Does this occur by accessing both the intellect and intuition? Bergson (1992, pp 34 - 35) describes the difference as follows:

Intelligence ordinarily starts from the immobile, and reconstructs movement as best as it can with immobilities in juxtaposition. Intuition starts from movement, posits it, or rather perceives it as reality itself, and sees in immobility only an abstract moment, a snapshot taken by our mind, of a mobility. Intelligence ordinarily concerns itself with things, meaning by that, with the static, and makes of change an accident which is supposedly superadded. For intuition the essential is change: as for the thing, as intelligence understands it, it is a cutting which has been made out of becoming and set up by our mind as a substitute for the whole.

Spinoza (in Parkinson, 1954, pp 182 - 183) states that “intuitive knowledge is not to be compared to seeing something, as opposed to inferring something ... and the inferences that belong to intuitive knowledge do not make conscious use of rules”. By its very nature, I find intuition difficult to describe and I am not able to always understand the writings of people such as Bergson and Spinoza, who have thought very deeply about these complex issues. However, despite Schon’s optimism (above), I still see us mainly focusing on the intellect and ignoring intuition in organisations, because I believe, seeing intuitively is not as static, knowable and justifiable as seeing intellectually.

To one degree or another, most managers reflect, but seldom reflect on their reflection-in-action. This creates dissonance within organisations. Managers usually feel they must choose between management science and techniques, or the intangible art of management. It also means that managers can’t support and guide others, which is a fundamental responsibility of management. If you can’t reflect on your actions and discuss it with others, then you can’t teach others to do it. Schon (1995, p 266) describes these systems as being immune to
learning, thus creating a disease that prevents organisations curing themselves. According to Schon (1995), healing could occur if management science and the art of management were not seen as poles apart and managers created models and concepts for use in action, as circumstances change.

I agree with the above sentiments and many people within organisations are attempting to do this. However, there are huge problems experienced in practice, even though many organisations support reflection-in-action as vital to learning and organisational improvements. We still have a long way to go for such endeavours to become a widespread reality. Resistance to reflection and conscious learning is strong. Many meetings of facilitators that I have attended, readily raise this as one of their major difficulties. The obstacles to organisational and individual learning are still not fully understood.

However, from my reading and my experience in organisations, I am led to theorise that the invisible and unspoken in organisations is linked to those things that do not make conscious use of rules.

**ORGANISATIONS NEED SELF ESTEEM AND LOVE**

As I continue to think about people, I ponder over what I consider are two fundamental issues. I see them constantly in my family, which is one aspect of my human inquiry process. They are the deeper needs and perceived truths underlying the way many issues are handled. I’m sure they also exist in organisations as fundamentals - yet are rarely spoken of: self esteem and feeling loved.

Does an organisation have self esteem, and do people in it feel loved? And what do we mean by ‘love’?

Loving-kindness or love .... is not an emotion resulting from the presence of a lovable person, or because one is with one’s family or children, or because somebody is worthy of love. ...When the Buddha talks about loving-kindness he talks about a quality of heart which makes no distinction between any living being. (Ayya Khema, 1990, p 36)
Hawley (1993, p 59) writes about the six landscapes of love. - “love as desire, as feelings, as action, as giving, as energy, and love as spirit”. In discussing love as spirit, he sees love as impersonal, unattached and nonneedy. “And because of that detachment, there’s no fear here. ... There’s nothing to lose, nothing to gain” (Hawley, 1993, p 69).

We usually don’t talk about love or acceptance in organisations. People don’t want to be seen to be ‘soft’, foolish, weird or easily taken advantage of. Work usually calls for us to be tough, make painful decisions, enforce regulations or be the ‘boss’. And we usually experience the opposite of love: fear (Hawley, 1993). Mother Theresa (in Hawley, 1993, p 59) refers to the “science of love” and believes that love must be given the same attention as other issues. However, I acknowledge that not everyone believes that it is as important to organisations as I believe it to be.

A biological interpretation of love is given by Maturana and Varela (1987, p 246), who describe love as the “biological interpersonal congruence that lets us see the other person and open up for him room for existence besides us”, or to put it another way, “the acceptance of the other person besides us in our daily living”. They state that unless we have this acceptance for others, there is no social process and therefore, no humanness; consequently, we would be “living indifference and negation under a pretence of love” (p 247). From a scientific point of view, many may not recognise this aspect of love, as it seems to disregard an objective and rational approach. However, Maturana and Varela (1987, p 247) believe that “love is a biological dynamic with deep roots” and see our humanness in the link between our knowing and doing. They do not search for scientific reasoning, but for a way of understanding our humanness and believe that “we only have the world that we bring forth with others, and only love helps us bring it forth” (p 248).

Not many organisations show evidence of this kind of love, i.e., a true acceptance by people of each other. Instead, we see a lot of anger and hostility between people or units, the same as we see within families. This isn’t usually talked about and cripples the development of integrity, self esteem and love within organisations. Does what we see within organisations, represent what is going on personally for people inside of themselves?

If people need self esteem to grow and learn and thrive on feeling loved - and I see the learning that takes place under these conditions within family units - then how can we learn in
organisations without these vital ingredients? How would self esteem and love manifest itself organisationally? In critically reflecting on these issues in my Diary, I concluded that some of the ways love can be identified in organisations, are through: a sense of warmth and empathy within the organisation; a sense of high levels of energy within an organisation; and the gain from organisational change outweighs the pain.

Love and self esteem involves both how we are and what we do. This is the very basis of spirituality within organisations – our practice and giving, as against intellectualising and taking. It appears that love and spirituality are inseparable. We are in touch with our spirituality when we attain loving practices, in the truest sense of the word. In combining both being and doing within organisations, we can attain new levels of harmony and spirituality within organisations - a key to the development of our organisations.

The marriage of the Eastern attunement with universal flow (being) and the Western ability to act on new information (doing) is a major aspect of the trend toward wholeness that is so central to an emerging spirituality. Together, harmony of thought and action takes us to new levels of evolution. (Redfield & Adrienne, 1995, p 119)

When we feel a certain ‘emptiness’ at work, we search to fill the gap, often outside of work. Is this the problem of “hollowness” that Berman (1990) writes of? Of “a-Voidance, ... of secondary satisfactions, [and] the attempt to find substitutes for a primary satisfaction of wholeness that somehow got lost, leaving a large gap in its place” (Berman, 1990, p 20). He asks whether the primary search for love that we are all involved in, is substituted with a secondary search for things like success, power and productivity? That perhaps if our real goal “is to recover a lost primary experience [i.e., love], then worldly or financial or artistic/literary success is all beside the point” (Berman, 1990, p 21).

A view expressed by Handy (1994, p 97) is that “if we want to reconcile our humanity with our economics, we have to find a way to give more influence to what is personal and local, so that we can each feel that we have a chance to make a difference, that we matter, along with those around us”. Formal democracy alone, will not create such an environment. We will have to change the structure of our organisations “to give more power to the small and to the local... while still looking for efficiency, and the benefits of co-ordination and control” (Handy, 1994, p 97).
WE OFTEN NEED TO CONFRONT OR CRITICISE.

Within organisations, we often need to confront or give critical feedback. We do have a choice about how we can do this.

With instinctive and spontaneous certainty that one is right, which is the way of arrogance; or with a belief that one is probably right arrived at through scrupulous self-doubting and self-examination, which is the way of humility. (Peck, 1991, p 163)

My experience leads me to believe that people primarily act arrogantly and not with humility. If this is the way most people act within their family or in their personal lives, why should they act differently in organisations? If we want healthier organisations, does this mean we need to have 'healthier' people? Most of our theories and models don’t seem to allow us to achieve this - we have not made the link successfully between learning organisations and learning people. Have we missed a special ingredient or two? What would it be?

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What do I keep referring to?
It seems to crop up continuously

The need to be egoless
The need for living our interconnectedness

Just being,
Stop intellectualising and finding the answers

If we stayed open
All would be well

Perhaps it’s still just one of my dreams.
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decision not to disclose information is made with integrity, as other factors in operation make
the timing inappropriate. On many other occasions, the decision not to disclose information
seems to be made for personal reasons of one kind or another - trade offs with a stakeholder,
or wanting to avoid an unpleasant situation, or wanting to keep things calm and under control.
In many instances there is no real understanding of the needs of staff, or of whether staff are
able to cope with the information, if it is released. “The assessment of another’s need is an act
of responsibility which is so complex that it can only be executed wisely when one operates
with genuine love for the other” (Peck, 1991, p 64).

I certainly don’t see people undertaking the decision making process as a moral process. What
a difference this would make to organisations. We are kidding ourselves if we think that
organisations are about processes, functions and structures. It’s frequently about personalities.
It’s amazing how a person’s position and power can be determined just by the politics and
perceptions they create. What effect does this have within organisations? From my own
experience, it can be very debilitating and demoralising. It sometimes seems that there is little
room for survival just through working with integrity. No doubt, it’s an individual choice and
responsibility to decide what values we individually hold and how we approach problems and
change.

**WE MAY NEED TO SEARCH IN NEW PLACES**

I’ve noticed that in times of turmoil, more and more people are becoming conscious of the
need for learning to learn, critical reflection and dialogue, as ‘new’ ways of working together.
In discussing this observation with a Critical Research Friend, Ian Mills, we agreed that there
seems to be more acceptance of intuitiveness during times of instability; whereas in more
stable times, intellect seems to predominate. From my experience in organisations and
reflections in my Diary, it appears that critical reflection, dialogue, critical conversations and
learning and emergence, are some of the most difficult concepts and experiences to embed
within our organisations. What these concepts mean will differ within and between
organisations.

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40 Observations recorded in Diary 4.6.95.

M Staron 1999  *A Personal Perspective on Organisations*
When working across a number of organisations, it has struck me:\footnote{Observations recorded in Diary 30.5.95.}

- how different our cultures are between organisations and how we don’t realise we (and not ‘them’) personally make up that culture;
- how difficult it is to keep up to date theoretically and how many practitioners are working with out of date theories and methodologies and totally unaware of it;
- how many people are either operational or conceptual and how difficult it is to get this blend within one person; yet these are the needs of the future.

The way that we tackle change seems to depend on our experience, values, learning, organisational culture and external pressures. We are always creating solutions and simultaneously feeling frustrated, that no sooner have we found the answer and reorganised or re-planned, another demand for change crops up. Sometimes I find that continual learning and change and the need to look in new places, can become very frustrating and disheartening. Groups feel this as well\footnote{Discussion with Critical Research Friend, recorded in Diary 25.9.95.}. They become resistant during discussions and decision making processes, signalling this through such processes as excessive laughter, avoidance or silence. To keep moving forwards, the group must work their way through this, i.e., through the tension and polarising issues. Such chaotic activity can become very positive, allowing something new to emerge.

Wheatley (1994) suggests that there are many places to search for new answers in a time of paradigm shift. This can be difficult, as in organisations there is still much comfort in following the lead of other, by using tasks and processes which have been implemented successfully in other organisations, such as quality management. There is also great discomfort in not knowing. We wait for leaders and gurus to inspire us and give us our answers. We listen to them when they address us at meetings, conferences and workshops, expecting them to show us the way, fix our problems and tell us what to do. We ask them to break down the rules and regulations or set up communication channels. Sometimes we realise that we need to take responsibility, but feel overwhelmed at the enormity of what needs to be done, the barriers we face and the standards that we are told to reach.
Kanter (1989, p 21) has observed that in organisations, people are increasingly reacting with a “growing weariness with hearing one more heroic story that simply does not match the mundane issues managers struggle with every day, the hard choices they must make ... and they are disillusioned with ‘superhero’ stories”. How will we create the changes that we need? Where will we search? It’s time we accepted that there are no gurus to do it for us - perhaps we need to become our own gurus. In this way, “you learn from everything, therefore there is no guide, no philosopher, no guru. Life itself is your teacher, and you are in a state of constant learning” (Krishnamurti in Lutyens, 1954, p 222). The most important place is to search within ourselves and when we want new work practices, we need to simply start living those practices.

The only way to find peace in our own hearts .... is to change ourselves, not by changing the world. There’s nothing to change out there. Everybody has to change themselves. The Buddha did not deliberately change people. He told them how to do it themselves. (Ayya Khema, 1990, p 70)

This would have to be one of the most difficult things to do within organisations.

Sometimes I can feel so sure,
I really know who I am
But then something happens

I read a book, I listen to someone
I question my motives
And I again plunge into uncertainty

I need to be aware, constantly
Of my thoughts and my motives
Such a hard task!

Leave aside desire and striving
Past memories and experiences

Just focus on the moment
Live each day anew

Do not rely on ‘gurus’
Doubt, question and find out for myself

A life long task
Do I make any progress?
INFORMING ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING THROUGH FAMILY/PERSONAL LEARNING.

Formal models and words often don't help us. For example, I've read about and practiced both strategic planning and thinking. However, what does it really mean? Formal descriptions don't really help me understand the difference between strategic planning and thinking. Current literature says strategic thinking is vital and planning is 'dead'. So, when I was asked to do a session on strategic planning, I wondered how I could explain it, so it actually meant something to the participants. Instead of going to formal strategic planning models, I focused on working out what it meant for me. I thought perhaps a family analogy might help. So I decided to talk about the kinds of strategic thinking my partner and I did in relation to bringing two families together - that didn't always want to be together, or do things in the same way, or even valued the same things. I was able to discuss our vision for the family and our thoughts about ways to live with the differences and difficulties. Then I talked about strategic planning - which was the design and planning of our new home and involved monitoring, reviewing and budgeting. I was able to explain that our strategic thinking was far more important than the planning, as the plan was only a means to achieve our strategic thinking; that the plan is a static record on paper at a particular point in time. As I talked, everyone in the group was able to think of their own examples of strategic thinking and planning, and some of the issues that they had to face in their work situation. I left them to decide for themselves what kind of strategic thinking and planning would be relevant for them - a far more empowering exercise, I thought (although not necessarily everyone else might), than the traditional approach of the teacher or trainer providing answers and frameworks for 'solutions'.

What I think I am doing is testing out how far I can integrate personal, family and work experience/learning and how I can relate it to formal work settings. Lots of people I have noticed, don't like the analogies - they see it as not relevant or 'professional' - especially the more senior people. But in some instances, it goes over really well and brings meaning to what appears to be meaningless work requirements or routines.

I'm noticing that 'speaking from the heart' brings a kind of satisfaction to the work environment that no amount of intellectual debate alone can match. However, some people
see it as a kind of ‘weakness’, and irrelevant, and don’t like it - others see it as ‘strength’ and courage. I think what really matters, is the honesty that you speak with and that you are true to yourself.

We so frequently avoid the personal. I was at a national workshop where three guest speakers were invited to address us. One spoke from her heart about her experiences and personal observations in relation to the topic she had to address. The other two speakers gave a typical presentation in an ordered, logical, impersonal manner. As a group, I noticed that we were captivated by the first speaker, yet it was interesting that at question time, all the questions were addressed to the latter two speakers. Why? Do we feel safe avoiding the personal and heartfelt issues? No wonder so many large bureaucratic organisations are full of demotivated and unhappy people. There are few answers for their personal questions, particularly ‘what’s in it for me’? As Doogue (1996, p 10) commented, “public servants everywhere have had to reach deep into the recesses of their souls and networks to remind themselves that they’re worthwhile”.

I know that I have developed my understanding of restructuring, organisational amalgamations and the impact that it has on people, through my experiences within a blended family. My partner and I have four teenage children between us. Over the last few years, watching the differences, resistances, hostilities, joy, blame and anguish within the family, has often in a way paralleled my experiences in organisations with restructuring, turmoil and change. We are supposed to adjust and accept it all within organisations and keep working productively and cooperatively - yet, in families there is no such delusion. It’s all hard work, long term and you ‘win some’ and you ‘lose some’; there is also a recognition that the relationships are just as important, if not more, than the family tasks and outcomes. That time must be put aside for ‘maintenance’ as well as tasks. Why would it be opposite in organisations, i.e., tasks before relationships?

43 Thoughts about change, speaking from the heart and self doubt, recorded in Diary 28.5.95 (see Appendix 7 for extract from Diary).
QUESTIONING OUR ASSUMPTIONS

I have rarely been in an organisational setting where our assumptions have been questioned - even if members of a group has requested that we do so. We are so attached to our solutions and theories. We assume that they will work, but don't search for the underlying assumptions of those solutions and theories - to see if the assumptions match reality. It all just seems too hard. We might not know what to do if the assumptions are flawed!

To question our assumptions more effectively, we need to be critical and reflective.

To become critical then above all means to become self-reflective in respect to the presuppositions flowing into one's own judgments, both in the search for true knowledge and rational action. ... In the context of applied social inquiry and planning, being critical therefore means to make transparent to oneself and to others the value assumptions underlying practical judgments, rather than concealing them behind a veil of objectivity. (Ulrich, 1994, p 20)

I've observed that instead of being critical and self-reflective, we look for fast, instant solutions. We expect miraculous things to happen and if we can't do it for ourselves, we try to bring it in through out-sourcing or recruiting someone new to do it for us. There is a belief that they will have the 'answers', they will know how to increase market share; they will establish effective relationships, they will ensure we reach agreed-to outcomes. We develop new plans, with the belief that all will go accordingly as planned. We assume, for example, that:

- we have skills of collaboration - do we?
- we want to learn and change - do we?
- if we focus on structures, roles and tasks, we will produce the kind of organisation and outcomes we/others need - will it?
- our economic, rational approach to organisations will sustain the development that we want - will it?
- more planning and improved controls will produce the outcomes we desire - will it?
- the needs of one will reflect the needs of many (or vice versa) - will it?
- we understand and can manage paradoxes - can we?
- we support and facilitate the learning of others - do we?
we talk to each other, we are in dialogue - are we?
we empower people within organisations - do we?

A basic premise of mine is that development and change is dependent on learning. But why does our learning not sustain the changes we desire so much? This is a fundamental question that I keep coming back to. We know what is ‘best’ and what we ‘want’, but we can’t always seem to create it. This dilemma faces us in all walks of life. For example, individually, we try to live healthier life styles, loose weight, get on better with our children and parents, use our money more efficiently, improve relationships with spouses/partners, etc. Globally, we know not to kill, but we still do; we know wars destroy, but there are numerous wars going on all the time around the world; we know we are destroying animal and plant life and polluting our environment at an increasing rate, but we still do it; we know the gap is widening between the ‘have’s’ and ‘have not’s’, but it still continues to get wider.

And when our assumptions are questioned, there is huge relief. I’ve noticed that in groups, if I have questioned assumptions, such as whether we really collaborate, there is huge relief that finally someone was talking about ‘real’ issues, issues that are deeper and more meaningful than a list of impersonal organisational expectations or policies. What we don’t know how to do, is handle these deeper issues once they are raised.

By delving into our assumptions and questions, and identifying our theories-in-use, we work our way through scenarios and possible solutions, which immediately raises a whole new series of questions for us to grapple with. A never ending circle - I think it’s this never ending bit that we don’t like. But most of us are silenced, or we are too scared to speak out, in organisations. It’s not okay to question. It makes people feel uncomfortable.

I see and I feel
But the organisation values doing and knowing
I like to question and stretch the boundaries
But the organisation intimidates me into silence
I love to learn
But the organisation doesn’t always welcome my learning
How can I find a place for me and my heart in the organisation?
And how can I share my heart with you all?
WHAT CAN WE RELY ON WHEN NOTHING STAYS THE SAME?

Since we can't rely on anything staying the same, then what can we rely on? We have to accept that we can't/don't know it all and that our relationships, trust and openness is what will get us through.

Richardson and Macneish (1995, p 60) believe that the only predictable thing during change are our agreements and that we need to create the third alternative:

*Autocracy*, 'do as I say' is natural. We've all experienced it and have learned ways to make good in it. .... We can make it sound plausible, necessary and temporary. *Laissez-faire*, 'just do as you like', is the other end of the spectrum. It's natural but is most likely to be the most stressful. *Democracy*, is the Third Alternative, 'we do as we agreed'. It is radically different to the other two. It's about listening, declaring and then making and keeping agreements. It demands and fosters connections not controls. This requires maturity, discipline and commitment by Everybody. It is the toughest alternative.

O'Toole (1993) states that there is no way that we will ever share the same vision, but democracy can ensure as a minimum, that we all get a fair hearing. He says that in this way, democracy is the "only system capable of providing a sense of legitimacy to a large and complex society" and can help us work towards attaining our dreams of liberty, equality, efficiency and community (pp 22 - p 23). Philosophical changes such as these in the way we work together means that organisations need to move away from the superficial controls and methodologies that are constantly being put in place. We will need a greater trust in instinct or intuitiveness. Redfield and Adrienne (1995, p 117) cite Novak describing this experience in sport:

This is one of the great inner secrets of sports. There is a certain point of unity within the self, and between the self and its world, a certain complicity and magnetic mating, a certain harmony, that conscious mind and will cannot direct. ... Command by instinct is swifter, subtler, deeper, more accurate, more in touch with reality than command by conscious mind. The discovery takes one's breath away.

Unfortunately our organisations continue to exert control by conscious mind. A move away from this entails a shift in paradigm towards holistic subjective world views. This has enormous implications for organisations - especially if instinct and intuitiveness is one of the main ways to get there. The 'masculine' focus on control and command is enormous in organisations - in fact, if it stems from paradigms operating within families, then tremendous
transformations need to occur personally for transformations to occur organisationally. Richardson and Macneish (1995, p 103) argue that the need for connections rather than controls, is fundamental to all living systems:

This choice has moral implications. It determines whether we create systems which damage, suppress or demean. Our deepest ideals are offended by forcing control, status or privilege. Healthy leadership has no time what ever for that stuff. It seeks growth, responsibility and rights. It’s search is for systems which enhance their societies and their people. It is leadership which connects and creates connections.

In creating connections, the power issues at all levels and functions within organisations will have to be surfaced, acknowledged and resolved.

**POWER ISSUES ARE CENTRAL TO ORGANISATIONS**

The huge unacknowledged power issues within organisations, impact on everyone. I regularly reflect on this in my Diary and with a Critical Research Friend, Trevor Edmond\(^{44}\). Morgan (1986, p 158) suggests that there is no one accepted definition of power and that many people find a good starting point with the definition provided by American political scientist Robert Dahl: “power involves an ability to get another person to do something that he or she would not otherwise have done”. Such power frequently comes with authority and who ever has the money, but not necessarily so. Power can come from many sources, all of which shape the dynamics of organisational life. Morgan (1986, pp 159 - 185) identifies 14 of these sources, some of which are: formal authority through one’s position; control of scarce resources; use of organisational structure, rules, and regulations; control of decision processes; control of knowledge and information; ability to cope with uncertainty; control of technology; interpersonal alliances and networks; managing the meaning of groups through processes such as group facilitation.

Though there is a general trend to distribute power more evenly within organisations, “the fact remains that some people are intrinsically more powerful than others” (Cairnes, 1994, p 12). We often associate power and seniority with the oppression of others less powerful, i.e., less senior.

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\(^{44}\) Discussion with Critical Research Friend, Trevor Edmond, recorded in Diary 25.9.95.
However, I have also observed senior people frequently feeling vulnerable and under attack from others within the organisation - how can they live through this? These feelings and experiences need to be facilitated, but rarely are. Our leaders are in a difficult position, as we project our dreams and hopes onto them and then crucify them when they don’t attain those dreams and hopes. “We project our wholeness onto individual women and men who are actually not up to our projections” (Mindell, 1992, p 129).

Our leaders cop a lot of flack
But how do they feel?
We want them to be perfect
But we’re gleeful over their weaknesses and mistakes
We blame them, they blame us
How will this help?
We know we need to work together
But the power gets in the way
There’s rivalry, ambition, status, put-downs
We’re not very kind to each other
So let’s stop pretending
And say it’s okay not to know.

It’s not that our leaders are bad or inadequate, it’s just that leadership is a role all of us need to undertake. “The best leader is at best only a facilitator for the wisdom already inherent in a group” (Mindell, 1992, p 129); leaders can assist group processes, but they do not create them. We must let the idea that we have to find the ‘best’ leader die, otherwise we will never take individual responsibility for what must be done within our organisations (Mindell, 1992). Real leaders are anywhere, anytime and they are aware of the group processes taking place and make room for it to happen; they do not abuse their power. Instead, power can be used to resolve conflicts of perspective and priority in such a way that it supports reason and inquiry into current and future issues (Torbert, 1991). But the only kind of power that will do this is a power that “invites and encourages mutuality, as well as confrontation of its own assumptions and practices” (Torbert, 1991, p 231). As Bawden (1997, pers. com.) said at a conference.

45 Discussion with Critical Research Friend, recorded in Diary 25.9.95.
46 Richard Bawden, Director, Centre for Systemic Development, University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury.
that I was attending, “real leaders emerge”, i.e., they emerge in response to each situation as it arises and the most capable person in each circumstance ‘takes charge’. This is possible because effective leadership is able to “maintain awareness in the midst of group chaos and confusion” (Mindell, 1992, p 54) and support others in exercising their own power (Torbert, 1991). As so beautifully put by Mandella (1994, p 26):

As a leader, I have always followed the principles I first saw demonstrated by the regent at the Great Place. I have always endeavoured to listen to what each and every person in a discussion had to say before venturing my own opinion. Oftentimes, my own opinion will simply represent a consensus of what I heard in the discussion. I always remember the regent’s axiom: a leader, he said, is like a shepherd. He stays behind the flock, letting the most nimble go on ahead, whereupon the others follow, not realizing that all along they are being directed from behind.

Power issues are usually discussed about those not present. We rarely discuss power issues associated with those present in the group. When we speak of a third party in their absence, it indicates that there is no real relationship there. Doing this, ultimately works against us. We usually make decisions about how to get rid of, or how to solve the problem of an absent third party, but it rarely works. It’s imperative that when we are in these situations, we openly challenge the decisions going on and ensure all those directly affected become involved

Sometimes, the third party is an alienated party within an organisation or group. We need to bring in minority positions, making room for their voice so that they can be heard. Underlying issues need to be surfaced for all parties and understandings shared. There needs to be open collaboration with all parties, without subtle duress on those who are resisting. Such duress forces people to take on the rest of the groups values and solutions. We need to make space for alternatives.

In Cairnes (1994, p 12) experience, organisations work best when people talk openly about power and accept that power can be a “useful and necessary part of getting things done”. However, I’ve been in meetings where we unconsciously maintain the ‘old’ culture, i.e., the one we are actually trying to move away from. I needed to have it pointed out to me how we were doing this. It can occur through hierarchy, theorising and intellectualising, being rational and sensible, not challenging power openly and by our problem solving approaches.

48 Discussion with Critical Research Friend, recorded in Diary 25.9.95.
49 Discussion with Critical Research Friend, recorded in Diary 25.9.95.
The main insight that I gained from these discussions with Critical Research Friends, is the need for me to learn how to challenge power without being annihilated.

**HOW DO WE REMAIN CALM AND PEACEFUL IN THE MIDST OF CHAOS AND CONFUSION?**

Sometimes we are fortunate enough to meet a person who is centred in the self and apparently beyond all differences. One such person, Divine Mother Amritanandamayi (or Mother Amma, for short) has been described as one whose “whole being gives us a glimpse of the state of being beyond the mind, the state of total egolessness” (Swami Amritaswarupananda, 1995, p 1). Mother is pure love. I find her descriptions of the way we could act and interrelate, inspiring. It seems to me, that if we are aiming for spirituality within organisations, we are aiming for “the practice of spirituality .... [becoming] an indispensible part of our life”, with a balance “created between spirituality and materialism” (Mother in Amritaswarupananda,1995, p x).

And spiritually, how do we live calmly in confusion and chaos? Mother tells us, “be a witness and never move away from the real center of your existence. Dwell in the Self .... [and] learn the art of witnessing, which is your true nature” (in Swami Amritaswarupananda,1995, p xi).

I used to think our ideal self and human nature (which I had interpreted as the way we acted) were two separate things. Mother Amma teaches that our ideal self *is* true human nature.

From another point of view, Bohm and Edwards (1991, p 159) suggest that our consciousness of self is limited to what we perceive through our mind and thought processes and that

most of what we call the true self is the response of memory that fills the brain, and this self is, of course, just the result of thought. But even if there is a true self beyond this, we’re not going to be able to see it as long as we are so confused about it.

Bohm and Edwards (1991) suggest we may have a true self, or our true self may be part of the universe as a whole.
In relation to self, Kornfield (1995, pp 205 - 207) describes how we have two tasks - one is to discover selflessness and the other is to develop a healthy sense of self. He believes that what we work so hard to achieve spiritually, is already there as part of our true nature. That we need to both develop and discover the self, as well as realise the emptiness of self. A paradox, yet through developing our spirituality, we are better able to handle paradoxes, contradictions and the associated conflicts. This comes through a greater acceptance of what is. Such an approach within organisations would surely enable us to come to better grips with reality and to produce more theories and models that incorporate not just the ideal, but the acceptance of the way things actually are for ourselves and for the world that we live in. Spirituality is vital to the well-being of organisations. It helps create and sustain long term change, helps us meet or change our long term goals. It brings our hearts, as well as our heads, into our organisations. Practice will more closely match rhetoric. Is the lack of spiritual growth within organisations the reason why despite knowing what we want, we can't seem to attain it?

In reflecting on the literature on spirituality and on discussions with Critical Research Friends, I began to reinterpret my three main areas of interest: self, human nature and organisations and to see them as interrelated, but with a sense of mystery and not completely understood. Sometimes, people seek something that is beyond themselves, something that is supernatural. When we do this within our organisations, we are searching for the lost soul; we can view the soul as the spirit and the spirit as the longing for what we can't reach. The purpose of life is to becomes one's self, to undertake the journey of self discovery and to find one's soul (Martin, 1994).

And bringing our soul into organisations will also mean bringing our passion for what we believe in. Martin (1994) suggests that our crises today in our institutions, our planet and people, has to do with a loss of soul. When we lose our soul, we lose our passion, our true self and replace it with our illusions.

So, not only must we claim back our souls if we are to find fulfillment and success in our personal lives, but in order also to be scientists in the future, we are going to have to be people of soul. In other words, the recovery of the passion that brought us to our vocation in the first place will also reshape the practice of science, from objective, reductive analysis of raw material to respectful relationship with mystery. (Martin, 1994, p 16)

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50 Conversation with Critical Research Friend, Robert Woog, recorded in Diary 13.2.96.
I understood more clearly my striving towards the ideal. Initially, I saw it as the spiritual side of the thesis. However, through reading, reflection and my own practice, I was beginning to understand that my striving for the ideal was not the only spiritual path that I could take. “Spiritual maturity is not based on seeking perfection, on achieving some imaginary sense of purity. It is based simply on the capacity to let go and to love, to open the heart to all that is” (Kornfield, 1995, p 311). A spiritual path is most closely aligned with the here and now. Kornfield (1995, p 8) describes it well when he says he used spiritual practice to strive for states of clarity and light, for understanding and vision, and I initially taught this way. Gradually, though, it became clear that for most of us this very striving itself increased our problems. Where we tended to be judgmental, we became more judgmental of ourselves in our spiritual practice. Where we had been cut off from ourselves, denying our feelings, our bodies, and our humanity, the striving toward enlightenment or some spiritual goal only increased this separation. ... Yet I knew that spiritual practice is impossible without great dedication, energy, and commitment. If not from striving and idealism, from where was this to come? ... What I discovered was wonderful news for me. ... We need energy, commitment, and courage not to run from our life nor to cover it over with any philosophy - material or spiritual. We need a warrior’s heart that lets us face our lives directly, our pains and limitations, our joys and possibilities.

I believe that our goals for organisational practices such as collaboration, honesty and truth, are usually unattainable because we haven’t accepted and seen all that there is within ourselves and in the way that we work together, which is frequently in isolation from each other and with dishonesty. As Mother Amma (in Amritiswarupandanda, 1995, p 7) says, we continue to be self centred and not centred in the self. An oversimplified point of view perhaps, but one that has eased my restlessness and confusion, and helped me stop my searching for underlying truths, at least temporarily. I no longer saw human nature as separate from self. Through her study of human nature and consciousness, from a quantum physics point of view, Zohar (1990, p 107) very poignantly explains:

To know oneself and not to know oneself, to be oneself and yet to escape oneself, to be independent and self-contained and yet to join with others and feel part of something larger than oneself - there are tensions with which we are all familiar. These are moments when the burden of the self, its perceptions, its responsibilities, its isolation, are almost more than we can bear, and other moments when we will fight with all we have to preserve it, to maintain our sense of ‘I-ness’ and ‘mine-ness’.
Zohar (1990) believes that as a quantum self, we have a commitment to both the world of nature and material reality. That we are all made of the same substance. That the same can be said of spiritual values, such as love, truth and beauty. From a quantum view, these values are not just projections of ourselves or something we can create, but have a being of their own which arises out of 'relational wholes' - i.e., out of their being they create relationships and their nature is the same as ours.

I had started my research searching for the ideal and I had a dream of how things could be. I had expected to pursue this dream throughout my research. However, my research has taken me full circle, towards what I consider a more realistic view of myself and others. Perhaps the dream that I had at the beginning of this research journey, could now be replaced.

When discussing human nature as separate from self, I now realise that I had been referring to human culture/foibles. And those categories alone, i.e., self, human culture and organisations, do not capture it all.

I had travelled some distance in understanding what I wanted to do in the thesis. I was beginning to be able to bring together all that I was interested in: the personal, spiritual and organisational.

I began to perceive that organisational models and theories, such as systems concepts and learning organisations, usually assumed an ideal self, i.e., assumed that we would be able to behave in the way required to implement these theories. And coupled with this is the emerging impact of information technology (IT) on our workplace practices. As IT keeps
changing and expanding at a tremendous rate, it’s not matched by our understanding of ourselves and our human culture. Everywhere there is rhetoric that people are our greatest asset. But how do unattainable goals, organisational visions that people can’t relate to or own, and stress and burn-out help our people in the long run? It’s always the quick fix - replace our employees, change our structures, just find something new!

**THE NEED FOR CONTROL AND ATTENTION**

I have always thought of the need for control as one of our greatest problems within organisations. Or is it that we seek attention through the controls that we put in place? As Mother Amma (in Amritaswarupandanda, 1995, p 8-9) says, “to crave attention is part of human nature” and the mind and ego cannot exist without attracting the attention of others.

People do achieve many outstanding things. However, many ambitions are based on ego. “This happens because people tend to dwell more in the mind than in the heart” (Mother Amma in Amritaswarupandanda, 1995, p 11). I see all this within organisations, invisible and unspoken. Lack of openness, subtle attention getting behaviour, the need to be recognised and honoured, inability to handle criticism and a sense of self importance. I know, because I also see it in myself. So spirituality may well remain rhetoric within organisations, unless we work to our own beliefs and spiritual needs. Where then, is there room for our leaders? “We can only imagine what the world would be like if we had ... bosses at work ...whom we could actually believe in - who embodied kindness, backbone, irony, humour, wisdom, righteous anger and protectiveness” (Biddulph, 1994, p 97).

Our leaders say they empower us
Bullshit!

Our leaders say they listen to us
Bullshit!

Our leaders say we can trust them
Bullshit!

Our leaders say we are now accountable and responsible
Bullshit!

Our leaders say we know best about what really needs to be done
Bullshit!

Will the rhetoric ever match the practice?
We cling to thoughts, possessions and control and when we are entrenched in such behaviour, we lose sight of the needs both within and outside the organisation. It's a paradox how success is equated with accumulation of control and wealth, to which we become very attached - but to see clearly, we must move beyond attachment, mind processes and expectations.

Worry, fear and an over-attachment to material success are the most awful blocks to the effective processing of information and sound decision-making. A belief in something greater than ourselves gives our life meaning and gives us something to live for and grow towards; it helps us to be 'in the world but not of it'. That is, it allows us to be present and active without being overly anxious or too close to the issues to deal with them with sane detachment. (Cairnes, 1994, p 67)

But how do you attain business success through spirituality? The very nature of organisations seem to reinforce un-spiritual practices and works against the development of 'Self'. Commercialism and spiritualism are polar opposites. New models of organisations are needed, that recognise and manage paradoxes such as: competition and cooperation; individuality and collaboration; control and trust; authority and empowerment; rationality and spirituality; logic and intuitiveness.

It seems to me that spirituality within an organisation is often a dream. Something we strive for. We each have our own interpretation of what it means. As Heiss (in Peter Fray, 1996, p 6) says, "you can't teach spirituality, it has to come from within you. It is a very sacred thing".

Like spirituality, many of the other changes we need to see occurring within organisations are sacred, because they also come from within us. Organisations need to allow space for this change and flow to continually take place.
CHAPTER 9 ORGANISATIONAL MOVEMENT:

Creating Space for Health, Human Nature and Democracy

Culture and learning
Support and democracy in organisations
Developing healthy organisations
What could be?
It’s becoming clear - I think!
Changing my approach to work
Do we take into account human nature?
Belonging
CULTURE AND LEARNING

Some years ago, I attended a three day workshop “Humanising Change” (1991), which had a profound impact on me. In my Diary, I reflected on why this was so.

The workshop attempted to create a number of experiences for participants, by creating different environments that represented different organisational settings. In this way, we learnt experientially about our reactions to these different settings - we all agreed it was very simplistic, but very effective.

The settings represented three types of organisations: bureaucracy, laissez-faire and collaboration. Generally, we experienced the following. In a bureaucratic organisational setting, outcomes were predetermined and we dutifully achieved them, but there was little individuality and creativity and a feeling of lack of energy/synergy. In a laissez-faire organisational setting, most of us felt extremely energised, pursuing our own individual needs and seeking our own outcomes. These types of organisations however, can create a high rate of burnout and a competitiveness that seeks to satisfy individual needs, with little collaboration or interest in the needs of the whole group. In a collaborative organisational setting, it felt very warm and comfortable to be there, as we tried to capture contributions from everyone in the group and to listen to each other. There was lots of fun and laughter. However, there is a danger that so much time can be spent in collaboration and meeting everyone’s needs, that decisions may take a long time or few outcomes are achieved (but not necessarily so).

How can we take the best of all our organisational experiences and ensure: 1) room for individuality and creativity; 2) minimum boundaries for the benefit of all; 3) a strong sense of collaboration; 4) support for individual needs and learning; and 5) efficient and effective achievement of organisational goals?

A model of Harrison’s (1991, p 11), which he presented at the workshop, is very useful here. It describes the levels of consciousness in organisational culture, moving from survival to transcendent behaviour:
- survival - focusing on existence and gratification of minimum needs;
- defence - focusing on reduction of anxiety and avoidance of chaos;
- security - seeking stability and risk avoidance;
- self-expression - providing autonomy and creativity;
- transcendent - creating meaning and congruence between values and behaviour.

We would have to learn our way through these levels of consciousness. However, organisations as such do not learn, but people do and so learning organisation models are based on learning theory. Jones and Hendry (1994) have identified one such model with five learning phases.

1. Foundation Phase - helps people to learn how to learn and take responsibility for their own learning; focuses on basic skills development.
2. Formation Phase - encourages and develops skills for self-learning and self-development, so that people can work in a variety of situations.
3. Continuation Phase - the individual becomes self-motivated, independent and confident, assessing their own future learning needs and activities; support is needed for those unable to cope with the changes.
4. Transformation Phase - is about thinking and doing things differently; if necessary negating all skills previously learnt so that things can be done differently; possibly revisiting Phase 1 to acquire new skills.
5. Transfiguration Phase - is the fully developed person or organisation, which has the capacity to cope with all and any change; leaders and envisioners act as facilitators of learning.

There is a strong relationship between developing our levels of consciousness within organisations (such as in the Harrison model, above) and moving through the phases of learning (such as in the Jones and Hendry model, above). Each create and support the other. If we are to develop our levels of consciousness through learning, then we will automatically also address organisational issues such as power, structures, relationships, processes and tasks. Learning will be through diversity - of people, ideas and needs; there will be little hierarchy based on the status of positions. The purpose is to both sustain a competitive edge, as well as improve the well-being of employees (Jones and Hendry, 1994).
As highlighted by Jones and Hendry (1994), organisations do not pass from one activity to the next and different parts within an organisation may be far more advanced in its activities and thinking than another. Most organisations will probably never reach the transfiguration phase.

Another way of looking at the change and learning that needs to take place is not by trying to implement organisational learning models such as those above, but by simply changing our focus within organisations. Bushe and Pitman (1991) describe this as moving from a traditional to an appreciative process. A traditional process can be described as “defining problems; fixing what is broken; focusing on decay”; an appreciative process “is described as searching for solutions that already exist; amplifying what’s working; focusing on life giving forces” (Bushe & Pitman, 1991, p 1-2).

Another approach (that I feel quite attached to) is to focus on unconditional learning, as opposed to what we mainly have in organisations, which is conditional learning. This insight occurred while I was writing in my Diary. Like unconditional love, I see little unconditional learning in families and organisations. We often learn what others require us to learn. In fact, what we see, think or feel is often ignored by ourselves or others. There are always conditions tied to prescribed learning - dollars, jobs, promotion, support, accountability measures, reviews, reports, belonging to the ‘right’ network, etc. Unconditional learning would allow us to engage in meaningful learning, which would be of benefit to both the organisation and the individual, as it would strengthen us in our jobs.

**SUPPORT AND DEMOCRACY IN ORGANISATIONS**

However, which ever way organisations choose to go (and there are numerous choices), they rarely provide sufficient support or space through times of change. We need more cost-effective mechanisms of support. This would involve trust - that individuals and groups know what they need and who can help them achieve their own and their organisational goals. We would not necessarily have to implement costly schemes, but have a wide variety of opportunities available. We may need to reinstate practices that our competitive and materialistic way of life previously deemed obsolete, such as eldership. Since we rarely have spiritual and wise leaders such as those in early tribal groups, it may be more appropriate to
our times, to develop eldership in our world through deep democracy (Mindell, 1992). Deep
democracy is about

that special feeling of belief in the inherent importance of all parts of ourselves and all
viewpoints in the world around us. ... It is our sense of responsibility to follow the
flow of nature, respect, fate, energy, ... and of our role in co-creating history. Deep
democracy is our sense that the world is here to help us become our entire selves, and
that we are here to help the world become whole. (Mindell, 1992, p 5)

Mindell (1992, p 156) goes on to ask: “Where are our wise women and men, boys and girls
who parent one another, encouraging us to admit and process our fear and love for others?”
We cannot keep fooling ourselves that our organisations can continue to be led by those
without eldership qualities. And we need to find and care for these wise aspects within
ourselves.

Sustainable, viable leadership means elders who are politically wise, psychologically
oriented people interested in personal development as well as everything else. We will
always need charismatic, inspirational leaders. However, even more we need
compassionate people who have feelings that go beyond right and wrong and the
borders of their own person and nation and are capable of understanding and helping
others. (Mindell, 1992, p 167)

Shifting our own internal, personal paradigm will have a far greater impact on organisations
than trying to shift whole-of-organisation paradigms, provided we make space for others to
shift and change as appropriate to themselves. We need to avoid what Wheatley (1994, pp 16-
17) often sees in organisations:

Some organisations defend themselves superbly even against their employees with
regulations, guidelines, time clocks, and policies and procedures for every eventuality.
... Some organisations have rigid chains of command to keep people from talking to
anyone outside their department...... We are afraid of what would happen if we let these
elements of the organization combine, reconfigure, or speak truthfully to one another.
We are afraid that things will fall apart.

How we approach the redefining of organisations and ways we work, will very much depend
on our values. I have assumed in this thesis that we all have altruistic values and something
gets in the way, resulting in our practices not matching our values. But what if our practices
do match our values! As expressed by Argyris (1990, p 184):
Most theories-in-use rest on the same set of governing values. There seems to be a universal human tendency to design one’s actions consistently according to four basic values:

1. to remain in unilateral control;
2. to maximise ‘winning’ and minimise ‘losing’;
3. to suppress negative feelings; and
4. to be as ‘rational’ as possible - by which people mean defining clear objectives and evaluating their behaviour in terms of whether or not they have achieved them.

The purpose of all these values is to avoid embarrassment or threat, feeling vulnerable or incompetent. In this respect, the master program that most people use is profoundly defensive. Defensive reasoning encourages individuals to keep private the premises, inferences, and conclusions that shape their behaviour and to avoid testing them in a truly independent, objective fashion.

The need then in organisations might not be for us to identify our values, but to get in touch with our deeper beliefs. There may be some incongruence between the two, for example, we may value and want personal power, but believe that power should be shared by all. The wonderful lists of organisational values that we design and display are in fact wish lists, never to be realised - unless we come to grips with our personal values in an honest way and seek to change them, if need be, ensuring that they are congruent with our beliefs. Certainly an individual or group activity and not a whole-of-organisation activity - really, a spiritual journey for us all.

In doing this, we would be able to release energy within our organisations. Sadly, many of our organisations are severely de-energised. In organisations, very few things energise or relax me. I don’t think I’m alone in this. I generally feel energised when I am working towards something that I personally feel is worthwhile and I want to ‘go for it’ - because it matches my values and belief system. As recorded in my Diary, the theory-in-use that emerged for me, is that this usually occurs in an environment which has: a positive mind set to learning, with the goal of learning uniting all involved; a feeling of safety, yet not complacency or maintenance of the status quo (a paradox in itself); showing respect for each other and working with integrity; looking forward to the change envisaged; and bringing in all aspects of myself, i.e., intellectual as well as spiritual and emotional.

In discussing this with my research supervisor, Judy Pinn, we concluded that such environments recognise that organisations are not so much about outcomes (i.e., respectability), but about being a community for people. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and
Tarule (1986, p 221) suggests that “in a community, unlike a hierarchy, people get to know each other. They do not act as representatives of positions or as occupants of roles but as individuals with particular styles of thinking”. I think the concept of organisations as communities of people is crucial. However, most of our organisations do consist of hierarchies, which as alluded to by Belenky et al (1986), operate in pathological ways. I think that if these hierarchies are to be adaptive and supportive, it’s essential within and between these hierarchies to develop healthy communities of people.

If we all listened to our hearts before we acted
What would the world be like?

If we all were true to ourselves
What would the world be like?

If we all put the welfare of others first
What would the world be like?

If we all could find the joy in life
What would the world be like?

DEVELOPING HEALTHY ORGANISATIONS

What are healthy organisations? I thought that the experimental Pioneer Health Centre (usually known as the Peckham Experiment), which studied families in a social setting and identified factors necessary to build healthy families, had some valuable lessons for organisations. This experiment commenced in the mid 1920’s in Peckham (England) and continued until the Centre was closed in 1950. The purpose was not to research ill-health, but to research people considered to be healthy; the aim was to create a healthy community of people, that were full of vitality and joy, able to fully develop their talents and potential, and meet their needs, both of body and soul (Stallibrass, 1989). Surely, this is what we desire within organisations?

There were five conditions that were created in the Peckham Experiment to meet people’s basic needs. These were: 1) the building; 2) the health overhauls and consultations; 3) the family and local membership; 4) the financial contribution of the families to the Centre.; and 5) the careful maintenance of a ‘strict anarchy’. Many organisations, in one way or another,
are familiar with the first four conditions. For example, buildings have been created to meet
the specific needs of the people within them, such as specially designed office space; health
consultations and exercise/stress management programs have been developed for them; there
has been family participation in some organisations, for example, through child care
provisions; and many organisations depend on contributions from members, such as shares.
The one condition that I was not familiar with, was the one of ‘strict anarchy’. This condition
would, I think, be the hardest to create in organisations.

The philosophy underlying ‘strict anarchy’ is that every person to be healthy, needs to decide
the direction of their own life, through being able to make a choice in any situation. In the
Peckham Experiment, as described by Stallibrass (1989), the researchers observed that when
people were organised into activities by an ‘authority’ figure, there was little follow through;
for example, people did not turn up for the organised activities, even though they had been
involved in a collaborative process to decide the type of activity, timing, etc. When given
complete freedom of choice, nearly all people, sooner or later, made an individual choice and
commitment to participate - in their own way, in their own time. The faculty of choice needs
to be exercised, if it is to continue to strengthen and grow. This choice-making process was
described in the experiment as “spontaneous action” and occurred when people responded to
their individual needs, as well as understanding the needs of their surrounding environment
(Stallibrass, 1989, p 45). Scott Williamson, one of the doctors in charge of the Experiment,
believed that spontaneity was essential to both growth and diversity in the environment, and
observed that through spontaneous action, order emerged (Stallibrass, 1989). It was this
process of order emerging from spontaneous action, that was labelled ‘strict anarchy’.

Williamson (in Stallibrass, 1989) believed that responsibility was a biological requisite of
organisms and that in healthy adults, authority and responsibility were polar opposites. He
believed that health came through individuals having complete responsibility, as well as being
conscious how individual choice would impact on others around them. Having created this
situation in the Peckham Experiment, the researchers noticed that there was no need to
establish leaders, in the traditional sense (Stallibrass, 1989). When needed and requested,
different talents were called upon and different people were called to lead and pass on their
skills and knowledge. People decided who they would follow and when. As time went on,
fewer and fewer people were “sheep waiting to be led and self-imposed leaders did not last
long” (Stallibrass, 1989, p 54). It’s important to note that the situation was not one of total
anarchy, i.e., no rules. The researchers observed and ensured that peoples freedom of choice was protected. The rules were about freedom and behaviour, not about authority, direction and control. This accords with the sentiments expressed by Krishnamurti (in Lutyens, 1954, p 20), who believes that following leaders automatically creates imitation and copying and "since our whole mental, psychological, make-up is based on authority, there must be freedom from authority, to be creative". Or as Fromm (1957, p 14) puts it, "most people are not even aware of their need to conform", believing their opinions are their own, even though they conform to most other people's opinions.

In many organisations, I've observed that the theory of empowerment of employees is being espoused, but employees are actually feeling disempowered through both the hierarchical and heterarchical processes of decision-making and checks and controls that are imposed on them. It seems to me that the evolving of 'strict anarchy' within the boundary of organisational goals, appears to be one way that organisations could truly empower their employees. This requires a lot of trust and faith - and time. Such 'healthy' behaviour in organisations would involve people being

aware of their own needs as whole personalities and also the needs of the greater wholes of which they were parts .... [and act] both with spontaneity and with discrimination, and to be well on their way to acquiring good judgment in many and varied fields of activity. (Stallibrass, 1989, p 88)

The researchers in the Peckham Experiment believed that it was not possible to quantitatively measure this kind of healthy behaviour, but that it could be examined through the quality of activity.

To create such a healthy environment, some degree of stability is required. "A person needs to be a distinct and effective member of a more or less stable group, and to have such a group as a base camp from which to make expeditions into the unknown" (Stallibrass, 1989, p 229). With the current instability within organisations through regular restructuring, downsizing and the increasing reliance on casual employment, such an environment may be extremely difficult to establish. It may mean that we cannot create healthy organisations. Frequently, the need for status and control and exploitation of people and resources, is too entrenched in us and most of our organisations. No doubt, not everyone would agree with my sentiments.
If we use the same criteria for organisations that was identified through the Peckham Experiment for healthy communities, then the focus must be on the *adaptive and healthy part* of organisations. That is, we must focus on those who can act spontaneously and autonomously, thereby supporting the growth of diversity, which in its turn supports the growth of individuality within organisations - provided that they take into account both their own needs, as well as the needs of others around them. The Peckham Experiment showed how this behaviour increasingly transferred to others. It was the focus on health producing activities that was essential instead of a focus on ill-health. Too often in organisations we focus on what is not working, instead of what is going well. How many managers and senior executives create enough space to spend time on what is working well?

*The Peckham Experiment*

_I listen and I hear people demand ‘equality’*_

*What are they asking for?*_

*To be included in the decision or action?*_

*To be given the same opportunity to do the same things?*_

*But is this equality?*_

*Or does it mean, give us space to enjoy our differences*_

*And not to make you feel more comfortable*_

*By becoming more like you.*

**WHAT COULD BE?**

One day in my Research Learning Group, we were discussing my research themes and Diary in detail\(^\text{51}\). Even though the members of the Group work in fields different to mine, they have all worked in bureaucracies or consulted across a wide range of organisations. We re-lived some of our experiences in organisations and then became passionate about ‘what could be’.

We acknowledged that the key is individual responsibility. But what does it mean? To be responsible is to make some kind of response, i.e., actively involve heart, mind and soul. Our discussions centred around the kind of responses we could make within organisations to foster a humane and caring environment, one that enables us to learn and change. We would need to

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\(^{51}\) Research Learning Group discussion recorded in Diary, 27.9.95.
change the way we look at organisations, so that they can be about recreating family into workplace, releasing the fear and regaining the trust.

We all, and particularly senior executives as our leaders, need internal transformation. There must be congruence between what’s inside and what’s outside. This means that our behaviour fits our espoused theories, or that our inner feeling, such as feeling happy, are expressed in our actions, i.e., acting happy (Argyris & Schon (1974). However, congruence may not always be useful, particularly when an espoused theory supports an inadequate theory-in-use (Argyris & Schon, 1974). But incongruence can be useful if it spurs us on to action and change. However, in the long run, it’s important to move towards congruence, if we want to develop a positive sense of self.

People need to be powerful - or is it safe? Internal processes are about reflections on who we are and what part needs to be safe. It seems that each of us needs to consider our own relationship to our own internal learning. What do my organisational experiences tell me about myself and ‘them out there’, i.e., other people? How can I hold myself safely in the middle of powerful people, so that I can also be heard? In a hostile environment, how can I be safe and heard and confident in my own knowing?

Crucial to our well being, whether in families, relationships or at work, is having high assertiveness skills; a strong identity; strong self esteem; and strong conflict resolution skills. If this is basic to the well being of individuals, it must also be basic to organisational well being. All four will promote a good balanced locus of control, minimise control and blame, and lower anxiety. However, we only need to work on any one of these four to gain positive results, such as reduced anxiety. Yet in most organisations, these are seen as the soft options, a waste of time or money, or only for those ‘not coping’. I would claim that our organisations are riddled with aggressive behaviour, unnecessary controls, put downs and the ‘blame syndrome’ - and most would benefit from learning and practicing the ‘soft’ options. We need to support and open up to such shifts and changes occurring.

Organisations need to heal the fear and search for new strategies. From spiritual teachers we learn fundamental humanistic values, wisdom and insight, positive attitudes and encouragement. But who within organisations relate to people, allowing them to be and helping them shift? It repeatedly crops up, that the key is human relationships within
organisations. When discussing this with a Critical Research Friend, Ian Mills, he pointed out
to me that people primarily relate to each other according to the function and position they
hold, not as one individual to another. People want to maintain their position and status and
therefore try to protect themselves. I believe that we can learn to establish non-
manipulative relationships at all levels within organisations, both up and down the hierarchy. Paradoxically,
if we worked mutually with each other and thought selflessly about our work, then we would
have more chance of maintaining our ‘position’ within organisations. This, however, would
take a leap of faith and a need to change our image of ourselves. People want certainty, but
depth down it’s the uncertainty that creates the excitement. A healthy adult can manage change
and uncertainty. If you hold a place of certainty within yourself, i.e., feel secure, it allows you
to sit in external uncertainty.

Issues such as these are fundamental to the healthy operation of our organisations. Yet they
are usually not spoken of.

**IT’S BECOMING CLEARER - I THINK!**

By this stage in my research, I knew that I definitely didn’t want to develop a proposition for
testing in one area within an organisation, as I didn’t want to get involved in more of the same
processes that I usually undertake in organisations. As a friend explained to me, I have
traditionally taken a facilitation, synthesiser, mediation and emotional balancing role at home
and at work. I was also good at conceptualising the thoughts of others. I now needed to
explore what happens in organisations through my own experiences, ideas and conclusions (if
any).

By now I definitely knew that I was no longer looking for solutions. “Many have fallen into
the abyss because they were looking for solid ground and certainties” (Okri, 1996, p 104).
Our environments are constantly changing, our understanding is constantly evolving and what
was right for yesterday may not be right for today.

However, at times, I still thought that I needed a key question. Well, I had finally found it, or
so I thought. It was a constantly recurring question: despite the body of ancient and modern
wisdom and knowledge around and within us, why can’t we create the futures we desire so
much? In relation to this, there were three major areas that I wanted to keep on examining.
1. The dynamics of ‘self’ - the ideals I have for the transformation of individuals, personally and spiritually, as essential to the transformation of organisations. What is the place of ‘self’ within the organisation; what is ‘self’? What is my view of an ideal way of thinking, doing and being in organisations?

2. Question the basis of our organisations - what are our large bureaucratic organisations really like with their systems, information structures and procedures? What is current organisational theory saying?

3. Examine human nature - develop a deeper understanding of human nature. Does it keep sabotaging the need for change within organisations? What is it about human nature that drives us to keep developing models and striving to make organisations implement these models? And what is it about human nature that stops us achieving these things? Do our organisational systems create and sustain vicious cycles of negative human behaviours and frailties?

I was considering the need for interviews and visits to exceptional work sites. However, I realised that so much has already been documented on leaders, organisations and organisational theories, that I could simply explore my three main areas of interest through a literature search. The issue of what my research was about kept unfolding, like peeling off the layers of an onion. A good analogy - except that onions make you cry - but so do organisations!

At the time, I was also listening to other researchers at our residential for thesis students. I particularly took note of Mary Harvie52 and her research on student ‘text’. I was fascinated by what she said and I thought about it in relation to organisations and my humanistic/spiritual approach.

She claimed that many things are invisible to people - which led me to wonder what was invisible within organisations?

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52 Lecture given at Post Graduate Student Residential, University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury, 1995, recorded in Diary 7.10.95.

M Staron 1999  A Personal Perspective on Organisations
• (She says) Some models are thrown out and others are accepted without any real rationale or logic, but based on emotional prejudice – (I ask) what does this do to change and progress within organisations?

• Everything always happens within a cultural context - what context was I working and writing within?

• Everyone is free to express themselves and speak, but in reality we are constructed in a certain way to write - therefore, are we constructed in a certain way to think and behave in organisations? Is there a core relationship between ‘self’ and organisations, which is changing all the time?

• Within an organisation or community, there is always a formal structure, for example, celebrations, rituals, committees and other ways of working, which are supported by the hierarchy and those in power. There is also an unadvertised or unsupported informal structure, which captures the hearts and minds of most people, for example, meeting outside of normal working hours, personal networks, celebrating special personal events. Somewhere between the two, you find the real meaning and learning. I began to wonder what the formal and informal structures were within organisations. Perhaps it’s when the focus is only on formal structures, that illusions are created about the purpose and operation of organisations.

As I searched around for ways to understand this, I couldn’t help but agree with Berman (1990, p 23) when he says:

let yourself move back and forth, then, between your own bodily history and an examination of larger, cultural processes and assumption. It is in this back-and-forth movement, I am convinced that real understanding takes place.

CHANGING MY APPROACH AT WORK

My research was starting to change how I viewed organisations and the people within them. Consequently, as my views about organisations changed, so too did my approach to my research. I was better able to articulate what I really thought and I had more confidence in the methods that I was using. I slowly began to see more clearly. It seems that this is a process many of us go through during our research. For example, Griggs (1996, p 63) in her search for integration in her life, brought both her learning and her spirituality into her research, and this brought a deep change into her conscious awareness; she expresses it this way:
I am often reminded that it is not my external activities which have radically changed since this ‘shift’, but the quality of my consciousness, that is my thought processes. The way in which I approach both my personal and professional activities has changed and indeed is continuing to do so.

For myself, I noticed I had less of a formal, impersonal and self-protective approach and I put more of ‘myself’ into my work. When talking to groups, I now discussed in a much more personal and open way, how context and tensions affect us, the assumptions needing to be questioned and issues associated with future directions. I was more prepared to rely on my intuition. I was forcing myself to conceptualise what I really thought was going on in organisations. During a discussion with a work colleague and Critical Research Friend, Lynne Stallard, she raised that issue that we don’t succeed or fail at change in organisations, but that we learn and change\textsuperscript{53}. Most people can’t seem to accept this.

I often assume that people are interested in conceptual and new/unknown contexts and possibilities - perhaps I am projecting my own interests onto others. What I discovered once again is that many aren’t interested and stay away from such discussions. Many people don’t want their world views disturbed, or they don’t seem to want to ponder over or get excited about change. There always are a group hungry and eager for new information, but many seem uninterested. Perhaps it’s because they don’t see the relevance for themselves, or that anything in their world has really changed. Human nature again rears its head!

I’ve worked in groups where we have been asked to come to grips with new directions and new ways of doing things. We really believed in what we were discussing. Yet, time and time again, when it came to putting our ideas down on paper, we went the safe way - with what is politically acceptable and a watered down version that all parties can live with. And in the end, it’s not what we write and document or models that we devise) that has the impact, it’s the personal presentation and selling of the concepts, the political lobbying that goes on behind the scenes. I realise that these kinds of activities are as old as the human race itself, but we act as those the papers (or models) drive our organisations. I discussed these issues with Lynne Stallard\textsuperscript{54}. She was expressing her unease with how political maneuverings and personal presentation creates acceptance of change, and not the agreed-to processes that have

\textsuperscript{53} Discussion with Critical Research Friend, Lynne Stallard, recorded in Diary 9.10.95.
\textsuperscript{54} Conversation with Critical Research Friend, recorded in Diary 9.10.95.
been documented in formal papers. Often the focus is on spending the money, more than on the innovation or quality of what is being done. How capable are we of true innovation? Do we just ‘play the game’ and use popular, new language, while our actions remain similar to what they have always been? Is it human nature?

**DO WE TAKE INTO ACCOUNT HUMAN NATURE?**

My focus was now clearly on human nature, on how it impacted on practices within organisations and the implications for organisational theories. What emerged in my Diary as I wrote, is that I was no longer looking for the new model or theory that would solve our problems. I recognised that there would always be models, theories, insights - new ‘knowing’. But at the same time, there would be a struggle by everyone to work and behave in new ways to match the new models and meet new expectations. And each time there is a major change, a belief that this time it’s different, that this time there will be real change. But few look at human nature, to see if there are changes ‘within’ that are congruent with the external and imposed changes. I believed that a study of human nature would give me some new insights and a way of unraveling the issues that I had raised. As expressed by Argyris and Schon (1974, p xi), ignoring human nature has a significant impact on organisations:

Research on the nature of effective organizations began to show that organizations were frequently in decay. The ineffectiveness, costliness, and deteriorating quality of products and services were found to be based on the fact that organizations were designed originally to ignore human nature, to ignore individuals’ feelings and most of their abilities, and to exploit them.

I felt that I had travelled quite a distance in my research through my Diary and finally knew what to explore: human nature, as the fundamental underlying issue. I had a feeling of satisfaction and calm - until I began to appreciate the enormity of what I had undertaken. I realised that I would not be able to do an in-depth study of human nature. This would be another thesis, in itself. I decided to just kept ploughing on and see what would emerge. I eventually realised that what I was exploring were human foibles - and that human nature and ‘self’ were one and the same thing.
BELONGING

The need of many people to belong to a group or an organisation, emerged during a discussion with a Critical Research Friend, Ian Mills. Most interpret the word 'belonging' as meaning acceptance in a group and behaving in ways that ensure this acceptance. However belonging could more rightly mean 'longing to be'. The basis of human nature is spiritual - we long to be what we are, in touch with our real selves, seeing things as they really are. This occurs in relation to other things, people and ideas, as well as in relation to ourselves. As described by Zohar (1990, p 220):

In summary, the quantum world-view stresses dynamic relationship as the basis of all that is. It tells us that our world comes about through a mutually creative dialogue between mind and body (inner and outer, subject and object), between the individual and his personal and material context, and between human culture and the natural world. It gives us a view of the human self which is free and responsible, responsive to others and to its environment, essentially related and naturally committed, and at every moment creative.

In this way, we no longer view our experiences as needing to get something out of someone else, but see our experiences as "the primary touchstone of both our individuality and the strange way our individuality depends upon everything else" (Whyte, 1994, p 278). Through the experience of belonging, we satisfy a hunger within our soul. We learn that there is nowhere to go "because the experience of interdependence is complete in itself" (Whyte, 1994, p 278).

One afternoon, I met with a work based learning group that I was a member of\textsuperscript{55}. The group’s focus was on learning about facilitation and group processes and on this particular occasion, there were five of us at the meeting. I record this particular meeting, because it was a unique experience for me within organisations. Before we got onto the ‘topic’ of the meeting, a member of the group mentioned concerns they had heard expressed outside the group meeting, i.e., corridor gossip. These comments had not been raised within the group previously, or directly with the people concerned. The person who had voiced the concerns was not in the meeting with us. This led us to a discussion about third party politics and a

\textsuperscript{55} Meeting recorded in Diary, 13.11.95.
decision to not get involved in such politics - a first, in my experience within organisations. We were practicing our higher levels of awareness within our own work group. We decided to 'go with the flow', with the only requirement being that we learn. Our discussions took us into areas that we were not so familiar with, such as 'fields' in groups and 'roles' people take on. We branched out to discuss awareness and interconnectedness, feelings, levels of consciousness and eastern and western philosophies. Everyone recognised that something special had happened, that we had gone to a 'deeper' level than normal, even though we had not talked directly about our topic, i.e., facilitation skills. We agreed that this was okay. We had developed an openness in our conversation and gone to a level not normally traversed in organisations. Some felt that what they had learnt and experienced would help them improve their facilitation skills. Others wondered what it meant and if it was okay to freely explore, to touch on some of our personal thoughts and not keep strictly to the 'topic'. We reflected on how it felt safe to raise issues and give honest and personal points of view, in the environment that we had created. We put this down to a feeling of receptiveness - you put one toe in the water, and depending on the reaction, you then step in a bit deeper. One person said that what was so exciting about our meeting, was that it was conversational and when there were silences, they were comfortable. No one was directing or controlling the group. It just flowed. A unique organisational experience. We decided that it had something to do with: dialogue; trust and openness; issues that were of personal interest, which brought in the whole person; being prepared to expand our levels of awareness and consciousness; and practising new ways of just being.\(^{56}\) Without the same degree of trust and honesty, we cannot recreate this in all organisational settings or with all groups, or even with the same group at the next meeting (and we may not want to). We may decide to strive towards it, but know that we will not always achieve it. We may not feel safe enough, or not feel that others are receptive to this way of being in organisations.

I record this experience here, as it is close to the idealistic things I have written about in this thesis. The interesting paradox is that it's seen by many as not really 'work' - but it's such a powerful experience and way of being, that it's experienced as very special. Do we need to improve our understanding of human nature, to understand why this is so? Do we all carry around in our minds, our own models of the way things should be?

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\(^{56}\) Outcomes of group meeting, recorded in Diary 13.11.95.
We all carry in our heads a model of reality put there by tradition, training, custom, prejudice. When the events of life and the behaviour of persons around us conform to this model we are at peace; and when they don’t conform we are upset.

Thus what in truth happens is that events/people do not upset us - the model we carry around in our head does.

The model is arbitrary and accidental. Realise that and you will not be troubled any more. (Valles, source unknown)

As described by Valles (above), we are in our comfort zone when events and people conform to the model of reality we carry around in our own heads. Does our model tell us what we perceive as the reality of organisations, it’s purpose and it’s values? Is it because of this that we find events like restructuring really distressing, because actions and behaviours do not conform to our own models of reality? People bringing in change are seen as ‘the enemy’, when the changes do not conform to our own model of what’s important and what we value.

It is now time to move to conceptualising many of the issues I faced, and insights I formed, as a practitioner and researcher within large bureaucratic organisations. What helped me to start, was that one morning, the image of a house ‘fell’ into my head. It was full of compartments and information, yet connected by its actual structure. I mentioned this image at one of my Research Learning Group meetings and they informed me that the house symbolically represents self. I then went home and started playing around with the image, gradually building on it and changing it, until two models based on my own grounded theory, emerged - one representing my organisational world and the other representing me as an individual in an organisation. At the same time, I analysed the context that these two models operated in and developed my own theory-in-use.
CHAPTER 10  REDEFINING ORGANISATIONS

Questioning Assumptions and Models

A new context for organisational theory
Why these Models?
Assumptions
The Models
Creating capability
New paradigms for change
Still focusing on tools and techniques
Defining organisations
The need for guiding principles
Can we move beyond paradigms?
A NEW CONTEXT FOR ORGANISATIONAL THEORY

In reviewing my research experiences, I now recognise that the ideal that I often strive for, of harmony and balance between doing, being and knowing in organisations, may be unreachable. Perhaps there is no congruence. This may be the reality for most of us. Perhaps the best we can do is to develop a non-static multidisciplinary context for organisational theory, involving philosophy, psychology, mysticism and economics.

Philosophy is learnt by the analysis and synthesis of all that we perceive through the five senses, psychology is learnt by the analysis and synthesis of all that we can feel in human nature and in our character, and mysticism is learnt by the analysis and synthesis of the whole of life, both that which is seen and that which is unseen. Philosophy therefore is learnt by the study of things, psychology is learnt by thinking, and mysticism is learnt by meditation. (Hazrat Inayat Khan, 1995, p 13)

Rather than philosophy, psychology and mysticism, we are more familiar with the economic context in organisations, where we focus on policies, profits, expenditure, cost-cutting measures, capital, productivity, outcomes and outputs, and the associated tools and techniques. We tend to feel that “unless it is managed, something is wrong” (Whyte, 1994, p 281). There is an increasing tendency to “see the human being as an object to be calculated, managed, analysed” (May, 1983, p 151). In Australia, economic survival is seen these days to be based on a knowledge-based industry (Lepani, 1995). But knowledge and economics alone, won’t save us. With the focus on the more visible problems, effort and money goes into ‘curing’ these problems so that we can then move onto new problems. It’s a very limited focus indeed. As Bateson (1972, p 145) says, “a bag of tricks for curing or preventing a list of specified diseases provides no overall wisdom”. Wisdom comes from integrating multidisciplinary approaches; from systemic understanding (Bateson, 1972); by integrating “our reasoning powers, our instinctive tendencies and our feeling for what is right” (Stallibrass, 1989, p 94); and wisdom begins with self knowledge, it cannot be given to us by another and it leads to transformation or regeneration (Krishnamurti, in Lutyens, 1954, p 22). As Proust (in John Gross, 1983, p 249) once wrote:

We do not receive wisdom, we must discover it for ourselves, after a journey through the wilderness which no-one else can make for us, which no-one can spare us, for our wisdom is the point of view from which we come at last to regard the world.
Not an easy thing to achieve, but it’s wisdom that is missing from our organisations. We need to consciously integrate these aspects, involving our intellect, heart and spirit. This is where our creative powers come from. Unfortunately in organisations, purposeful consciousness usually dominates our decision making processes (Bateson, 1972).

What I have observed in organisations, occurring simultaneously, are the following aspects of complexity.

1. The way we want to be and the way we want to work- and everyone has some kind of vision or model of what that is, devised from organisational theories as well as personal visions and ideals.
2. We still have to work within an imposed framework - imposed by stakeholders and clients, both politically and economically.
3. All this involving the huge range of people’s abilities, needs, attitudes, values, beliefs, insights, experiences, silences and spirituality.

I have attempted to portray this complexity in two models (Model 1 and Model 2, below). Attempted, in that the situation within organisations is far too complex to be accurately and completely described in such Models, which lead to simplicity, avoiding the feeling of chaos. I will have made something ‘understandable’, when in actual fact it’s quite mysterious, evasive, invisible and puzzling. A paradox I will have to live with.

**WHY THESE MODELS?**

- They give the ‘whole’ picture of what we have to grapple with at work - it’s based on my practical experience within large organisations (mainly in the public sector).
- They give some reality and context to organisational and management theories that focus on various aspects, such as chaos theory, systems theory, skills development and individual/group practices in organisations. I am looking more at breadth than depth.

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57 For information on purposeful consciousness, refer to pages 85 – 87.
58 Developing models for the thesis, recorded in Diary 23.5.96 – 25.5.96 (see Appendix 8 for extract from Diary).
• They help me put my knowledge and experience ‘together’ - and to make sense of the
different roles each of us undertake within organisations and the different settings we
work in.
• They try to put together the complexity that we face in organisations and why we find
organisational life so difficult - as we are usually operating in one of the ‘boxes’, while all
the other things are going on simultaneously around us. And when we are boxed and
separated, conflict automatically arises.
• They portray why people tend to be conscious of only some aspects within an
organisation, encountering huge obstacles, inflexibility and pain when change is
implemented.

ASSUMPTIONS

Underlying the development of the Models are the following assumptions.

1. People are critical to organisations, therefore a fundamental aim of organisations is to
develop personal and organisational capability through learning.
2. Attention needs to be given simultaneously to all situations we find ourselves in, i.e.,
individual, group, organisational, community/region/nation/world.
3. Many levels of ‘events’ occur simultaneously within our work environments.
4. Many tensions exist side by side, such as: hierarchy and heterarchy; competition and
mutual dependency; flexibility and tightly defined procedures; training and learning;
control and support; local and global; planned and unplanned; reflection and action;
centralisation and decentralisation.
5. People react unpredictably within organisations and appear to not be managing continual
change well.
6. The external environment alone, will never provide a complete picture of organisations.
Just as influential is our subjective, internal reality.
7. Within organisations, invisible and unspoken, and not based on conscious use of rules, are
key driving forces such as relationships, perceptions, spirituality and our need to just be.
THE MODELS

The Models portray a multitude of variables that are in a constant state of flux within organisations, that are interrelated, and that produce a kaleidoscope of situations. I've portrayed this through:

Model 1: which describes the range of phenomena directly impacting on our organisations.
Model 2: which describes the complexity of individual influences impacting on organisations.

There is no single organisational environment and the Models try to acknowledge this, as we cannot describe organisations in either purely objective terms or only in subjective, imaginative terms. May (1983) believes that it's more accurate to say that human beings live in a world, more so than saying human beings live in an environment. He describes three worlds, which involve us in the following relationships.

1. Of ourselves with others around us - this is the world of interrelationships, which helps create for us the meaning of others in the group; and helps determine our view of our responsibility to others in this world.
2. Of ourselves to our own inner world - which is more than a mere subjective, inner experience, but is the basis on which we see the real world and its individual meaning to us, which helps determine our view of our individual fate and what we must struggle with.
3. Of groups and individuals in relation to the events and environment around us - this is the world of objects around us, including our natural world and helps determine our objective view of events around us.

We live in these three worlds simultaneously; they are interrelated and continuously impact on one another; and "the reality of being in the world is lost if one of these modes is emphasized to the exclusion of the other two" (May, 1983, p 129). It's from our relationship to ourselves, to other people and to events around us, that we design our own world. I have attempted to incorporate these perspectives in the two organisational Models that I have designed - one looking into organisations from outside (Model 1) and the other looking at the
individual within the organisation (Model 2). Unfortunately they are passive Models, which fall far short of the dynamic patterns and complexity that actually exists.

Model 1: Our Organisational World

In Model 1, I have categorised what I have experienced and observed in organisations, into 4 main ‘layers’:

- organisational events;
- individual relationship to oneself, others and imposed frameworks;
- organisational goals and objectives;
- events external to organisations.

1. Organisational Events

The first ‘layer’ consists of five main interrelated events within organisations, which are: maturity, learning, process, development and operations (see Figure 9).

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Figure 9: Events Within Organisations
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1.1 Within each of the five events, there is a rough hierarchy of events, *all taking place simultaneously within the organisation*. These events are presented in the table in the centre of Model 1. For example, in organisational maturity, there are levels of dependence, independence and interdependence. In one sense, we can move 'up' the hierarchy or work in a number of levels at any one time; in another sense, all levels are required within the organisation and one level is not necessarily 'better' than another. Conflict occurs when a person learns to work across many levels, but is 'officially' boxed in at only one level within the environment. The more that we are 'boxed' into any one level, the greater the conflict.

1.2 There is a rough similarity in sophistication and level *across* the table, for example, the level of dependency roughly equates with the level of reliance on indicators and training.

1.3 The hierarchy is not static – people move all over it: sometimes by organisational events overtaking them and forcing change; other times through choice and learning; and sometimes by working simultaneously at different levels on different projects and tasks.

1.4 Some attempt to see the 'whole' picture; *most just see the events that are directly impacting on them*.

1.5 The table of events is like a photograph - just one frame at a particular point in time, in the sea of activity in the organisation. It is constantly moving, i.e., the events and their relationship to one another are constantly changing.

1.6 It may be that the ability to work at any level is the ideal, i.e., knowing and doing what is appropriate in each circumstance.

2. Individual Relationships to Oneself, Others and Imposed Frameworks

The next 'layer' identifies some of the organisational worlds that emerge through relationships, inner individual perceptions and through imposed frameworks within which we must work.
2.1 As individuals or as members of groups, we have our own ideals and visions, i.e., our dreams of how we would like to be or how we would like to work.

2.2 Our family experiences and learning impact on the way we think and act within organisations.

2.3 Within the organisation, there is a huge range of individual and group abilities, needs, values, experiences, beliefs, insights and achievements.

2.4 Frameworks are imposed within the organisation, such as structures, requirements and practices. These are constantly changing.

3. Organisational Goals and Objectives

Another ‘layer’ in organisations, aims to drive actions, productivity, services and/or profits through goals and objectives.

4. Events External to Organisations

There is also a ‘layer’ of external influences continually impacting on organisations politically, economically, socially and religiously through governments, communities, regions, nations and other organisations.

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**Why is it so complex in organisations?**

*We can see what’s happening immediately around us  
But we can’t see what’s happening elsewhere*

*We guess and speculate  
Try to manipulate and control*

*Why are we boxed in to work in one particular way?  
When our hearts and needs may lie elsewhere?*
Model 2: Complexity of Individual Impact on Organisations and of Organisations on Individuals

Within Model 2:

1. It demonstrates in a simplistic way, from my perspective, how the individual impacts on the organisation and its goals through two paths - the personal and the group; and simultaneously, how the organisation impacts on both individuals and groups.
2. Every individual and group develops their own aims and personal philosophy through the impact of:
   - their ideals and visions for themselves and their work; and their needs, values, abilities, beliefs, insights and achievements;
   - a framework of requirements, practices and structures, which is imposed on the individual;
   - both hierarchies and heterarchies, with individuals scattered across many levels of events, i.e., within maturity, learning, processes, development and operations;
   - family experiences and learning;
   - external influences, such as governments, other organisations, communities and regions are also profound.
3. We are not always aware of the impact of these world environments on our decisions and relationships within organisations.

The organisation wants me to stay focused on its goals
But so many things get in the way

External and internal
The influences are great

Management thinks I'll change
Just because they impose new requirements

But others
Influence me just as much

We box and design
But does it ever really capture what we want to say and do?
I propose that all world environments within both Models are:

- invisible as well as visible;
- unspoken as well as spoken;
- constantly changing and moving;
- totally interrelated and interconnected;
- rarely all seen or understood by any one person.

Often what is easily seen “are the lesser things, the things meant to perish. The most important things are the things you don’t see” (Okri, 1996, p 53). We must learn to manage the tensions and paradoxes and as Handy (1994) suggests, develop a sense of continuity, a sense of connection and a sense of direction.

**CREATING CAPABILITY**

The concept of ‘capability’ is central to the above Models, as individuals and groups require some form of capability to achieve organisational goals. This involves people having confidence in their ability to: take effective and appropriate action; explain what they are about; live and work effectively with others; and continue to learn from their experiences as individuals and in association with others, in a diverse and changing society (Stephenson, 1995)\(^5\).

The notion of self confidence is rarely spoken about in organisations, yet is a key to the development of spirituality and intellect.

Self confidence arises when one is able to do the things one sets out to do. .... Self confidence has many facets. It’s not aggressive but is a feeling of certainty that we can rely on ourselves completely. ... and there is a feeling of rock-bottom security inside oneself. (Ayya Khema, 1990, pp 83 - 84)

With such a feeling of security, we would be able to free ourselves to create environments that nurture and support our growth and development. However, many organisational approaches

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\(^5\) For definition of capability, refer to page 43.
fall far short of creating capability - practice does not match rhetoric or theory. There is no
one model for capability - it's a philosophy and mind set, a way of life. Everyone has their
own ideal of what capability would look like in practice and everyone strives to achieve
capability, in their own way. It is context relevant. The focus needs to be on facilitation and
on asking questions and listening to each other, on understanding, accepting and managing
paradoxes, and on the process - instead of continuously seeking solutions, the right answer,
identifying actions and outputs. This helps us work capably with people and environments
that in reality are unpredictable and uncertain - despite the fact that we usually act as if much
is predictable. The key to capability is knowing what questions to ask - and only the people
involved know the questions that need to be asked. It therefore involves a huge level of trust -
that people know what they need to learn and how best to learn it.

Organisations could set up processes to encourage an exploration of such questions as: what
theories and models do we base our current practice on? what does our actual practice look
like? do we believe this practice reflects capability, as defined above? if not, why not?
Following that, we can also ask:

- what predictable and unpredictable circumstances await us/our organisations in the future?
- in such circumstances, how do we recognise capability?
- what is the criteria by which we would judge whether our group is moving towards the
capability ideal?
- what theories and models do we need to understand?
- what practices do we need to put in place?
- how will we monitor and critically discuss the changes taking place?
- what values and beliefs will nurture and support us in moving towards capability?

It is frequently forgotten, that the basis of making informed decisions about change is a sound
understanding of theories that underpin the change. Some relevant theories and models in
relation to capability that I have referred to earlier in this thesis, include: work based learning,
learning organisations, action learning, action research, learning contracts and agreements,
group learning and facilitation, critical conversations and dialogue, strategic questioning,
systems concepts, chaos theory and fuzzy logic.
NEW PARADIGMS FOR CHANGE

A focus in many organisations remains on creating new paradigms and conceptual models for learning and change. For example, the paradigm for learning, discovery and creativity as defined by Smithson (1996)\(^{60}\); another by Fullan (1993), which aims to mobilise and energise the forces of change through co-existence of the following eight principles: 1) you cannot mandate what matters; 2) change is a journey and not a blueprint; 3) problems are our friend; 4) vision and strategic planning come later; 5) individualism and collectivism must have equal power; 6) neither centralisation nor decentralisation works; 7) connection with the wider environment is critical for success; 8) every person is a change agent.

These paradigms and conceptual models often can’t grasp the actual reality of change, which is ‘fuzzy’ and indeterminate.

The point is that usually we look at change but we do not see it. We speak of change, but we do not think about it. We say that change exists, that everything changes, that change is the very law of things: yes, we say it and we repeat it; but those are only words, and we reason and philosophize as though change did not exist. In order to think change and see it, there is a whole veil of prejudices to brush aside, some of them artificial, created by philosophical speculation, the others natural to common sense. (Bergson, 1992, p 131)

I don’t really know what the solution is to change within organisations. I do know that we will keep trying to manage change and to establish new conceptual models. Bergson (1992) suggests the way towards understanding change is through collaboration and universal agreement, as do Richardson and Macneish (1995). However, I find it interesting that in organisations, we often fail to see that change is continually going on all the time, whether we want it or not. We act as though things are static and then design new programs for change. “We like to treat [change] as a series of distinct states which form, as it were, a line in time” (Bergson, 1992, p 146). By breaking change up into a series of steps or parts, we lose reality. It may help us in a practical sense to handle change in this way, but it still means that our very models of change are unrealistic. Our interpretations of reality haven’t worked very well as we haven’t really understood the movement of change.

\(^{60}\) For further information on Smithson’s paradigm, refer to page 138.

M Staron 1999  A Personal Perspective on Organisations
Bergson (1992) suggests that reality is a fact. That it’s our interpretation of reality that creates ‘truth’. And our agreed-to ‘truths’ that are seen objectively and are repeatable by experiment, would probably be different, if at the time, different people had discovered these ‘truths’.

When we are convinced of a ‘truth, we tend to turn it into reality, for example we believe that a bank note really has a certain value.

One can conceive an order, a harmony, and more generally a truth, which then becomes a reality. .... Everyone could see for himself, in fact, that the most ingeniously assembled conceptions and the most learnedly constructed reasonings collapse like a house of cards, the moment the fact - a single fact really seen - collides with these conceptions and these reasonings. (Bergson, 1992, p 132)

As described by Bergson (1992), it can take very little to collapse one ‘truth’ and replace it with another. During my research, I developed my own principles for change, which focused on the need to simply ‘be’, in the moment and with an openness to living, learning and growing. I thought that I had moved beyond paradigms, but my supervisor Judy Pinn, brought me back to reality with the realisation that I had developed just another paradigm.

**STILL FOCUSING ON TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES**

Within organisations, the focus is still primarily on tools and techniques (or the visible and known) as a way of creating success within organisations. They certainly help people to create new processes, solve some problems and achieve some goals and outcomes. However, in over twenty years of organisational experience, I’ve seen very few tools or techniques (in themselves), in any context fundamentally change the way we work or act as human beings - this is despite the massive amount of ancient and modern wisdom and knowledge available to us. As expressed in the Tao Te Ching (in Man-Ho Kwok, Palmer & Ramsay, translators, 1993, p 151):

The more rules you have, the more unhappy people are;  
And the more weapons there are, the worse things happen.  
The more we want luxuries, the more we abandon simplicity -  
And the more laws you pass, the more we will break them.

Observations such as these, reinforced my view that there really are very few solutions and that I had ‘discovered’ what many before my time, had known. The more I searched and learnt, the less I actually knew. The more that I got involved in groups, the more I saw how
difficult it was for people to cooperate and understand each other. I could see how we were all entrenched in our own points of view and continually losing sight that a range of views and differences are valid (even if all views cannot or should not be implemented). If we insist on the certainty of our own views, we negate the other person.

If we want to coexist with the other person, we must see that his certainty - however undesirable it may seem to us - is as legitimate and valid as our own because, like our own, that certainty expresses his conservation of structural coupling in a domain of existence - however undesirable it may seem to us. Hence, the only possibility for coexistence is ... a domain of existence in which both parties fit in the bringing forth of a common world. (Maturana & Varela, 1987, pp 245 - 246)

Conflict will never be resolved while people hold onto their certainty. “Conflict can only go away if we move to another domain where coexistence takes place. The knowledge of this knowledge constitutes the social imperative for a human-centered ethics” (Maturana & Varela, 1987, p 246). To enable us to do this, we need what Bateson (1972, p 75) describes as “a combination of loose and strict thinking”. Logical and operational thinking alone destroys our ability to think new thoughts and vice versa. When we rebel and let our ideas run wild, we likewise lose. I've also learnt that we need a combination of loose and strict thinking during research and thesis-writing.

What I am observing is how in any group I go to, most of the time the symptoms of the problem are taken to be the problem itself. The personal things people are trying to come to grips with are seen as unimportant or irrelevant. It's the issues that people have and not just their tasks and outcomes, that need to be focused on. Work often doesn't get done, because these unspoken issues get in the way. Few say what they really think. We seem to accept that at work we act in certain ways and certain people have power and control over us. And these people delight in that power and control. It's an unspoken way of being in organisations. Most of us have lost touch with our inner selves, with our connections to nature and with a belief that we are all capable people. We often have the skills that we need; we just don't know how to use them in new environments. I am increasingly being asked to facilitate groups who want to keep their ‘power’ and resolve their own issues. I am presenting fewer and fewer

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61 Group Facilitation is a process in which a person who is acceptable to all members of a group, substantially neutral, and has no decision-making authority intervenes to help a group improve the way it identifies and solves problems and makes decisions to increase the group’s effectiveness. .... The facilitator's main task is to help the group increase its effectiveness by improving its process (Schwarz, 1994, p 4).
content-driven sessions. I can see that facilitation is a skill lost to most people - our focus has been on training and ‘telling’, for so long. Facilitation is a critical skill for the future.

Boud (1996) takes the need for facilitation a step further and defines the need for ‘animation’. He sees facilitation as being in the individualistic tradition, with value-free connotations (with which I don’t necessarily agree), whereas at the other end of the spectrum, the socialist, collectivist tradition often ignores the individual. He suggests that ‘animation’ bridges the gap between both traditions, as it is the function of working with the experience of others, and the ‘animator’ is the person promoting other peoples learning. “A particular feature of animation is that the successful animator will need to be continually moving back and forth between the perspectives of the individual, the group and the wider socio-cultural context” (Boud, 1996, p 14). My belief is that we have to do this, whether we name it facilitation, animation or any other jargon that may be emerging at the time.

The old ways of people in power telling others what to do and imposing new structures and outcomes, is no longer working. I see our organisations breaking down. And paradoxically, the more our leaders feel out of control, the greater the emphasis is on becoming output driven, more structured and on increasing controls. Leaders frequently ask for facilitators, but then instruct them to complete tasks - I have even been asked to ‘not spend too much time on making people feel good’. Facilitation sounds nice to many people, but they may have no intent of working with process. We are content mad and so few have any clue about process. The focus is usually on tasks, but tasks alone do not keep groups together.

Where has the dialogue gone? Where are the opportunities for learning and critical conversations? How are we going to manage the ongoing complexity and uncertainty? “We can’t choose not to have complexity, but we can choose what to do with it” (Richardson & Macneish, 1995, p 69). Our leaders are assuming certainty about what is needed, about loyalty and commitment and that we all understand what has to be achieved. We hear it often: ‘we must meet to decide action, but let’s not waste time on words’. Yet it’s the understanding through words that creates the action. Organisations primarily concentrate on techniques (i.e., the visible) and give an impression that “understanding follows technique”; however, we need to see that it’s the reverse, “that technique follows understanding” (May, 1983, p 151).

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62 Process refers to how a group works together, for example how they solve problems, how they manage conflict. ..... In contrast, content refers to what a group is working on (Schwarz, 1994, p 5).

M Staron 1999  A Personal Perspective on Organisations
Even when we do the right thing by others and listen, co-learn and co-design our futures, there is still a huge underlying fear by the people involved that ‘it won’t last’, that the momentum will be lost - and they are usually right! It would be so good if we could ‘see’ each other, respect each other’s capabilities and provide opportunities for all of us to use our capabilities. We appear to have lost the ability in organisations to work meaningfully in groups. The focus is predominantly on communication and information systems (such as storage, use and interpretation of information)and less on human interaction; this will increasingly be the feature of new organisational models (Morgan, 1989).

Moves to re-interpret organisations in this way will be disastrous. Our organisations will continue to become ‘de-humanised’ as the technical and operational paradigm becomes increasingly embedded. There must be space for our organisations to more fully become living systems, where the connections and interrelationships are understood, nurtured and developed. “While we have little control over much of what happens in our life, we can choose how we relate to our experiences” (Kornfield, 1995, p 318).

What’s the wonder of organisations?
For me it’s meeting with soul mates
For me it’s when we listen to each other and understand
For me it’s trying something new
For me it’s seeing people learn and grow
For me it’s when I feel excited and energised
For me it’s when I’m in touch with my heart.

Bateson (1972, p 430 - 431) points out how important it is for us to consider and maintain the uneasy balance that occurs between competition and mutual dependency. Competition alone creates disequilibrium within living systems; parts of systems can get out of balance and ‘die’; other parts consequently flourish. How many organisations are actually prepared to consider the impact of both competition and mutual dependency?

Many of our ways of working together have been embedded in organisational unconsciousness. Reasons why we have certain habits have become unconscious; we just
know what we want to do, not why we do it. We need to rethink what we wish to raise to consciousness, as “it is not possible for any system to be totally conscious” (Bateson, 1972, p 142). He believes that consciousness is selective and partial and is therefore a small part of truth. In deciding what we wish to raise to consciousness, we need to be aware that “no organism can afford to be conscious of matters with which it could deal at unconscious levels” (Bateson, 1972, p 143). Likewise I would think that no organism, i.e., organisation, can afford to be unconscious of matters with which it needs to deal with at conscious levels. How do we decide which is which?

**DEFINING ORGANISATIONS**

So, how do we define organisations? Soon as we try to do this, we put in place static words to describe something that is moving and constantly changing. I don’t believe that there is any one definition of organisations. Perhaps we could ‘search in new places’ for a definition - or definitions. This need is described by Cairnes (1994, p 17) in the following way:

> The real change that has taken place is in a dynamic world of energetic movement, relationship and perception. Few people understand this world, and words and currently existing concepts of how organisations work only seem to get in the way of explanation.

My supervisor, Judy Pinn, suggested that I try using different voices for a definition. This suggestion came after we had listened to a speaker, Susan Murphy\(^3\), talk about co-creative space and the approach Le Guin (1989) has taken in regard to speaking in different tongues. There is ‘father tongue’, which is powerful and is spoken by men rationally, objectively and with reason. This tongue differentiates, clarifies, focuses on decision making and is the language not of reason, but of distancing. ‘Mother tongue’ is for stories and is spoken by women, children and women for children. It brings the earth with it; it is the language of relationships, connections and experiences; people speaking in this tongue offer their experience as their truth. And there is a third language, ‘native tongue’ which brings mother and father tongue together. Everyone has their own native tongue. This is the true discourse of reason and brings together the best of both mother and father tongue.

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\(^3\) 1997 Residential for Post Graduate Research Students, University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury.
I had some fun writing in each of these tongues. In reflecting on what I had written, I felt that I had created a far more realistic picture of organisations, than any single 'sensible' definition could. The three definitions bring together the head, heart and soul.

According to father tongue:

Organisations need efficiency and productivity
Cut down on costs
Develop and maintain systems
Value the people
Provide quality products and services
Meet the needs of our customers and stakeholders.

According to mother tongue:

Now take care of yourselves
And don't work too hard

You keep such long hours
I worry about you

Tell me all your problems
I'm sure that I can help

Let's look after each other
And tell the boss to go to hell.

According to native tongue:

An organisation is a place I go to most days
To be with people
To do something satisfying

To do something not just for myself
But for the well being of others within the organisation
To achieve new things
To be efficient

To feel each day, a job well done
To be told occasionally, a job well done.

THE NEED FOR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Despite the bleak scenario painted by Morgan (1989) (above), I do believe that it will help if we develop our own guiding principles with which we can work and believe in. The aim of these principles is to support us in: learning and developing; raising our levels of consciousness; supporting differences within the work environment; achieving work outcomes more effectively and with greater satisfaction; and creating sustainable environments.

Such principles influence the choices we make and the way that we operate in any of the contexts described in both Models (above). In analysing my research experiences, the insights that I developed from this and the recurring themes that occurred in my Diary, I identified the following principles as fundamental to me.

1. Let the people’s strengths and insights drive the organisation, instead of straight jacketing people with an excessive number of imposed requirements, rules and expectations - take a leap of faith.
2. Relationships and processes, and not just functions and structures are vital to the well being of organisations.
3. Allow creativity and practicality to reside side by side. Allow plans to flow out of everyday work practices, inviting in the underlying chaos and uncertainty, applying both rational and fuzzy logic processes.
4. Combine action, critical reflection and dialogue as regular and legitimate practices within organisations.
5. Ensure both head and heart inform all decision making processes. Know your real self and be aware of what is driving your decision making processes.
6. Avoid third party politics and surface power and authority issues. Invite all into the process from the beginning, in some way that feels authentic.
7. Make available a wide range of tools and techniques, so different parts of the organisation can examine all the options and make different choices.

Personal principles such as these need to rest within broader social, spiritual, organisational and physical contexts. Zohar and Marshall (1993, pp 275 - 281) believe that the most profound, coherent, visionary and well-articulated principles come from quantum physics and these are listed below.

- Recognise that we are both self and other - see ourselves as individuals, as well as a part of wider groups, through which we explore and create ourselves.
- Live at the edge - keep ourselves open to new experiences, new attitudes, new possibilities, so that we live at the level of our potentiality.
- Celebrate diversity - accept the infinite spread of possibilities, which may all be contradictory, yet enable unity to be created through diversity.
- Commit to dialogue - put our beliefs or plans ‘on hold’ and remain open, allowing new understanding to emerge.
- Commit to our common ground - known as the quantum vacuum, even though it’s not actually empty; it’s ultimate unity underlies all the differences, creating the meaning and helping us commit to diversity.
- Commit to the future - it appears that through the process of evolution, we commit ourselves to the future and the value of diversity.

I return to the central metaphor of Zohar and Marshall’s (1993, p 281) book, that “evolution needs its many dancers, but all are dancers in the same dance”.

**CAN WE MOVE BEYOND PARADIGMS?**

Having started this research journey with a desire to establish a new, or perhaps a multiplicity of paradigms within organisations and spending most of the research journey exploring or conceptualising one paradigm or another, I now end this particular journey with a realisation that we need to move beyond paradigms.

But what does it mean to move beyond paradigms? In some way it must mean moving beyond the intellectual and beyond the idealistic models that we like to create, which are often
illusions. Such paradigms and models are usually hierarchical with a patriarchal mind-set, that keep us in search of an out of reach ideal; we need to move toward what Berman (1990, p 312) calls “bodily presence in the world”. It must also mean moving beyond our belief systems. As Krishnamurti (in Lutyens, 1954, p 35) says:

Is it possible to live in this world without a belief - not change beliefs, not substitute one belief for another, but be entirely free from all beliefs, so that one meets life anew each minute? This, after all, is the truth: to have the capacity of meeting everything anew, from moment to moment, without the conditioning reaction of the past, so that there is not the cumulative effect which acts as a barrier between oneself and that which is.

In some ways, knowledge can hold us back - in the known and in our previous experiences. How do we move beyond this? Is it about living in a non-conceptual reality of head, heart and soul? As described by Berman (1990, p 307), it may be about taking ‘the road less travelled’, which he sees as recognising that more important than finding a new paradigm,

is coming face to face with the immense yearning that underlies the need for paradigm itself. This means exploring what we fear most, viz., the empty space or silence that exists between concepts and paradigms, never in them. We are indeed in a system-break, and the temptation to stuff the gap is very strong; but the “road less traveled”, which is that of looking at the nature of paradigm itself, is the truly exciting and liberating path here.

He also suggests that there will be no healing of ourselves and our culture without taking this path; and the need will remain - it won’t go away over time. He believes that there is nothing less at stake than the chance to be “fully human” and since “this is our destiny, the latest heresy or paradigm-shift is simply not going to cut it” (p 307). We need to include more than just intellectual or analytical knowing, as by themselves, they are “hopelessly incomplete. .... Presence and self-remembering, is terribly difficult and where the real work begins” (Berman, 1990, pp 307 - 308). As Berman (1990) says, we need to learn what it is to live without paradigm. In doing so, we need to accept that Mystery exists, and know that there is a larger process at work that we cannot always directly apprehend. And the paradox is that moving towards this, still creates a new paradigm.
CHAPTER 11 EPILOGUE

Can I live what I believe?

What emerged out of my research
Where to from here?
The need for continual movement and non-linearity
Retaining the invisible and unspoken in organisations
I sit here wondering where to next?

My search is 'over'
My Masters is 'complete'

Why do I feel so down?
By now I should have the answers!

The last few years of searching
Well, really, a lifetime of searching

I now know that I don’t know
Even though I sometimes delude myself into believing otherwise

I have researched my way to some understanding
Believing in something greater than us all

Our spiritual needs are surfacing
We talk about it openly at work

No longer hidden as it was some years ago

Be nothing
Do nothing
Know nothing

How can I just be?
Expect nothing

Every day at work
Demands otherwise

Will I go with my ego and needs?
Seeking status, power, knowing

Or will I keep in touch
With my own spirituality?

Today, I feel so sad
It’s feels such a long journey

Attachments!
I have to give up more, not less!

And how will I survive in organisations
That strive for
Productivity
Profit
Controls

What do we get?

Manipulations
Heartache
Separateness

Is there enough belief and faith to

Trust
Love
Respect?

Or do we continue on in fear
Hiding it from the world

Saying what we do is okay
When deep down we know it's not okay

Living in our heads
And not in our hearts.

WHAT EMERGED OUT OF MY RESEARCH

During my research journey, I searched for a number of things: to find myself; to articulate what I really thought; to be less afraid; to find alternatives to the current ways we behave in organisations; to express my perceptions about my experiences within organisations; to critically examine some of the behaviours within organisations; and to make meaning of my experiences and relationships within organisations, as well as within my own family - in fact, to find my place in the world.

This search occurred at various levels of inquiry, i.e., the analytical, reflective or insightful levels and sometimes synergistically at all three levels. I captured the results of these inquiries through regular (often daily) entries in my Diary. The Diary recorded my lived experiences within organisations, my critical conversations with others and my reflections and insights. As a participant/observer within organisations, I found that things rarely occurred in logical, neat ways. Often I had to employ a fuzzy way of thinking and being and from my experiences, analysis, reflection and insights, some theories emerged. The theories that I developed are my
way of bridging the gap between the theory that I read and the reality that I experience. I employed a heuristics approach to my research, because it supported this process of analysis, reflection and insight and allowed me to concentrate more on the meaning and essence of my experiences, rather than on justification and measurement. I was able to begin to understand the nature of my lived experience and to describe what this meant to me as both a practitioner and researcher within organisations. There is little closure to this process, as the more I learn and research, the more there is to open up, to question and to understand.

In proposing that organisations need space for continual movement and that they need to surface the invisible and unspoken, my findings emerged as both outputs and outcomes.

**Outputs**

These are the categoric and generalisable findings that result from my analysis and interpretation of the research events that I was involved in. They can be summarised as follows.

- There is often a gap between the organisational theory that I read and the organisational experience that I have. Theories do not take into account the invisible and unspoken in organisations, and the unpredictability and mystery of human beings. This results in us not behaving as described in most organisational theories and plans.

- Consequently, our assumptions are fundamentally flawed. As a result of questioning these assumptions, I developed a new set of assumptions and a whole-of-organisation model of complexity.

- Throughout this process, I re-discovered that the individual remains the key to effectiveness within organisations and that the individual needs to be guided by principles relevant to them and the groups they work in. I researched and developed my own set of guiding principles for working within an organisation.
Outcomes

These are the intuitive insights and learning that I gained from my critically reflective, self directed inquiry. This is the area that excited me most during my research as I began uncovering and articulating many of my intuitive and unconscious thoughts and insights. As a practitioner within an organisation, I usually find little time for this and it was only through the process of my research, that I was able to uncover much of the invisible and unspoken.

- Visible outputs (i.e., planning, acting and thinking logically, based on rules and procedures) are very valued in organisations; invisible outcomes (i.e., intuition, feeling and being, not based on the conscious use of rules) are not so valued. By over-focusing on the ‘producing’, other more invisible parts of the organisational system slowly dies. By particularly ignoring the interconnectedness and the soul, unhealthy organisations flourish.

- Despite the body of ancient and modern wisdom and knowledge around and within us, we are often unable to create the futures we desire so much. We learn a lot intellectually, but have great difficulty in implementing it in practice.

- Human relationships are a key within organisations. However, people tend to relate to each other according to the function and position they hold, not as one individual to another.

- Personal development is the basis for organisational development. Many think that by focusing on skills development in organisations we can change organisations. It’s the individual in relation to others and the opportunities for personal development, that creates the learning and change.

- The real barriers to change and learning are mostly internal, within ourselves. The ‘blame’ syndrome often excuses us from taking any responsibility within organisations.

- There are strong links between self esteem/self confidence and the capability of individuals and organisations.
There is either fear or love within organisations. Love can be viewed as being deeply present, as spirituality, as ‘giving’, as acceptance of others. Fear can be viewed as withholding information, holding onto resentments, feeling too ‘scared’ to speak out and not being true to oneself in the actions we take within organisations.

There is a need to learn how to challenge power without being annihilated and to be aware that we so willingly give away our power, to those who are so willing to take it.

The more our traditional methods fail us, the more we pretend that we are in control.

Organisational paradoxes are becoming more complex, more difficult to identify and increasingly difficult to cope with.

In trying to better understand complexity and change (which is never static), we design and rely on conceptual models (which are always static) - a paradox in itself.

There is often a lack of congruence between what’s happening inside of ourselves and what’s happening outside of ourselves in organisations.

The paradigms we move between sometimes appeared contradictory and fuzzy, or perhaps domineering and exclusive (as opposed to inclusive). But so is life!

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Towards the concluding stages of this research, I commenced a new job in a new, but still very bureaucratic organisation, as the manager of a new professional development unit. As a result of my research, I tackled my working life in a new way. However, some things always stay the same - as they say, a leopard never changes its spots. Some senior managers still created obstacles and withheld information; others were always ‘guarding’ their territory; some continued to have difficulty coping with change. Many of the organisational issues that I had identified during this research still existed. But what was different was that I was determined to work in new ways.
I still occasionally had feelings of ‘fear’ creep deep down into the pit of my stomach. I still felt intimidated by some senior people and some situations. However, the way that I worked with my immediate colleagues changed. The way we designed our vision, objectives and work for the new unit was dramatically different - it involved much more of what our souls needed and we made room for both head and heart in the way we worked together. We were conscious of our spirituality and our needs. Together, we were implementing many of the principles that I have espoused in this thesis. We attempted to capture key principles and to place them within planning frameworks required by the organisation. Spiritually, I attempted to walk in each day ‘fresh’, leaving behind as much as possible from my previous experiences and knowledge. My question now became: can we continue to work in this way or as has happened to many before us, will we be squeezed out of the system?

Well, I soon had my answer to this question. After four months of being in this job which was so new and different to what most people were working on in the bureaucracy, there was another major restructure. My fourth in around seven years. So I lost my job, obtained a new position in a newly restructured and amalgamated organisation and within a few months, was feeling depressed and demotivated. I felt I had to start all over again. Though this time not with excited and motivated people, but with most people worn out from continual rounds of restructuring, sick of the bureaucracy, not sure if they could muster up their energy and excitement again and unable to accept the way the new organisation did things. I was now in an organisation that had more than doubled, with over 110,000 members amalgamated from three different organisations. I am a manager within this mammoth organisation, with 9 colleagues in the ‘team’.

When I was in the previous new and stimulating position, I had started to wonder whether things were as dismal as I had discovered during my research. I was in a personally rewarding job working on new and exciting things, applying the principles that I believed in. Now of course I see things as worse. In fact, I would be unable to undertake such a research journey at this point in time - the hurts are too deep and raw. I still try to apply what I believe in and what I have learnt, but circumstances make it difficult for me to retain my energy and compassion. It’s time to leave and see if it can be different some place else. So now I am again focusing on learning about what I really want in a job, what excites me and when I have been happiest. I believe that to create something new for myself, I will need to keep
developing a better understanding of myself and others, find new and exciting things to do, and to be true to myself. As Krishnamurti (in Lutyens, 1954, p 229) says:

You may give away your money, or persuade other people to contribute theirs, and you may bring about marvellous reforms; but so long as your heart is empty and your mind full of theories, your life will be dull, weary, without joy. So, first understand yourself, and out of that self-knowledge will come action of the right kind.

**THE NEED FOR CONTINUAL MOVEMENT AND NON-LINEARITY**

One of the few things that my research ‘proved’ to me was that there is no linearity in life, including organisational life, even though we pretend there is, through static models, plans, propositions and theories. The continuum of organisational life never moves along a straight line. Consequently my research and conclusions keep veering off into new directions, with often contradictory and confusing new conclusions. The answers keep changing as my awareness levels increase. There are no key questions and no key solutions, only the need for further questions, the recognition of constant change and the provision of space for movement. This includes space for marginalised ideas and the development of theories that are dynamic and related to specific individuals, groups and organisations, rather than static and generalised.

As proposed by Garrick and Rhodes (1998), we need to question the organisational need to eliminate disorder and to doubt the ‘sense of order’ that it pretends to have created. Instead, we need to embrace the tentative.

What then is there for a postmodern epistemology of organisational practice? We believe that the challenge is to articulate a theory of practice that questions absolute principles of reasoning and works through its own values. What can result is a form of organisational practice where understanding organisations, change and learning is informed by a skepticism towards conclusiveness and an embrace of the tentative. (Garrick and Rhodes, 1998, p 174)

This view reflects the research journey that I have undertaken. At the end of my thesis, I still remain tentative and ‘open’, which reflects the data in my Diary, my experience as a participant/observer in organisations and my fuzzy logic approach to life.
RETAINING THE INVISIBLE AND UNSPOKEN IN ORGANISATIONS

Throughout my research, I searched for the invisible and unspoken in organisations. I found that it is about heart, soul and spirit, about those things that do not make conscious use of rules. I remain concerned about how to write about this topic and how organisations can vision and consciously practice it. I am aware that as we stop to reason, describe and understand things like spirituality, we become confused and can actually lose touch with it (Ponder, 1967). Nevertheless, it is one of the emerging issues within organisations, as we so often feel ‘soul-less’ and yearn for a connection to the spirit and soul of the organisation.

I’ve come to understand through my own spiritual practices, that if we surface it by presenting a universal definition of spirituality or creating workplace models 'to bring it in', we’ll destroy the very essence of spirituality. It’s very personal and can’t be imposed on us by others. Intellectualising is not the spiritual in workplaces,

So in one sense, we need to retain it as the invisible and unspoken within organisations. Paradoxically, in another sense, we can create space for spiritual practices or views within organisations and a recognition that spiritually-linked insights resulting from intuition and an acceptance of others, have a real place within organisations and need to be visible and surfaced.

What do I really think?
Why doesn’t someone just ask?

Maybe you don’t want to know?
Or do we just live on our assumptions?
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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APPENDIX 1

Extract from Diary: 12.4.95

Meeting with Judy Pinn

The initial issue was the need for a framework for methodology. Robert Woog joined us for this part of the discussion and suggested a holonocentric methodology. In the center is the issue - “a way of thinking, being, doing organisations”. Branching off this are the paths I will explore such as themes, projects and values/ethics. From these explorations will emerge linkages and connections.

Judy and I then discussed my “first attempt at pen to paper”.

I was feeling some confusion as I was now starting to explore my feelings and views through my dream, philosophisings, and passion about issues such as learning and capabilities. However there I was firmly planted in the world of work, working on projects and emersed in administration. What should I do? I felt I would need to do “proper” research. And no sooner did I think, ah ... this is it, the issue is “learning”, then new experiences and learnings would broaden my understanding and it became “capabilities” or “values” or “being/doing” that I must dedicate myself to. Also, I was trying to read a variety of books, and felt that it was more appropriate to concentrate on authoritative sources than on my own views.

We discussed these issues, and I have recorded below some of the outcomes of the discussion:

- The need to link my thinking and dream to my practice at work and context.
- In terms of Social Ecology, others will need to be involved in this process, and learn from it to.
- How is the dream and my day to day actions pursued in parallel? How do they influence each other?
- My thinking, feeling, work and family are all connected, and it’s a valid way to begin my research.
- I’ve shown the known on paper. Underneath is the unknown, and unnamable at the moment - it’s what I am searching for.
- Map a circular model, using a cobweb approach, and create linkages.
- Stay with the fuzziness and mess. Record what it feels like. It’s a real process. As professionals we are not supposed to feel like this.

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64 See footnote 12 in Chapter 2, sub-section Further Connections and Linkages Needed To Be Made - What Method Could I Use To Capture All This? for reference in the thesis to this Diary extract.

M Staron 1999  A Personal Perspective on Organisations  247
• I agreed to:
  - create a cobweb
  - keep a diary of readings, my feelings and reactions, and ah-ha insights
  - build up information on each theme, separately.

• Consider a literature review through:
  - readings
  - my own reflections
  - discussions with others.

• In this way the small part I record of organisations, reflects the “whole” picture.

• Consider finding stories and myths to explain my views and experiences.

As Judy and I talked, I thought of a poem I had come across a few days before, as I was rifling through some papers I had stored away. This was a poem a friend had written about me some five or so years ago. I now reproduce the last paragraph, and I must admit with some hesitation and uncertainty:

Keep to your vision and judgment
Be as gentle as ever you were
They may understand in the long run
But they’ll never see how you arrived

I’ve reproduced this paragraph because it seemed such a “coincidence” to suddenly find the poem, and it made me think about why I was doing this thesis. I suddenly felt that this thesis is about “how I have arrived” in my thoughts, and where I am going.

I think of the meeting with Judy.

I arrived with such confusion
I must be the only one to have ever felt like this!
  This state is permanent
  I will never be sure again
Who am I to add to the body of knowledge?
  But one meets a guiding light
    Understanding
    Sure of the process
    Have faith
    Stay with it
It’s all part of the process
And something exciting will come out of it
APPENDIX 2

Extract from Diary: 22.4.95

Meeting with Robert Woog

I was at the residential for Masters thesis students. As each day went by, my confusion got deeper and deeper. I really had no idea how to proceed with the thesis. I also noticed I was not alone in being unsure.

I thought perhaps the only way out of confusion would be to commit myself to one of the issues I was interested in and research it - capabilities and competencies would be a good one, I thought. Or should it be learning and how organisations respond to this?

It was the third day on the residential when I mentioned my confusion to Robert, and he offered to help me. Robert read the paper I had previously prepared for Judy. He immediately understood my dilemma - by the differences between the way I wrote at the beginning of the paper (about my thoughts, feeling, views), and how I wrote in the latter part of the paper (about my work projects). I had not been able to create a useful map in the form of a 'cobweb'. Robert suggested I was looking for links too early on in my work. I didn’t know whether to start separate “diaries” on each book I was reading and each topic I was involved in at work. Also my ideals were getting in the way.

We looked at all the options and finally agreed to stick with the diary. Robert advised me to just concentrate on the one thing - a diary recording my critical reflections as they occurred. Because in the end, every thing is interconnected and the links will appear. It won’t matter if I reflect on a topic or book today, something else tomorrow, and get back to the book a month later.

Some of the discussions we had were as follows:

- Organisations operate at a level that is suitable to themselves. It is the level that they aspire to. Consequently the goals they achieve are limited by that level.

- Organisations can have:
  - internal discord - they might set lofty goals, but choose thread bare ideas and methods. There is a paradox between “what is” and “what could be”.
  - external discord - where there is external feedback that functions within the organisation are inappropriate.

- Where is there room for lofty ideals and spirituality in organisational life?

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M Staron 1999  A Personal Perspective on Organisations 249
Can an organisation have a soul, which leads it to lofty ideals? The soul allows the organisation to be aware of itself, and have critical observation.

The way to an organisational soul is for it to learn its way there. It must be simultaneously conscious of value and practice together.

There is no place for values that don’t fit the functions within organisations.

How do I, with my values, stay a member of an organisation which is antithesis to those beliefs? Can I?

Consider the illusion of a learning organisation. Organisations are projected as higher and loftier operations; yet improvement within organisations is only a little better than previously.

I could consider undertaking an ideological exploration and description of my lofty ideals and values, and try to embed them into an organisation. Therefore I create an ideal. Then in practice, I can explore what is happening during this process:

- why and what is emerging?
- what is blocking the creation of these ideals within an organisation?

Observe organisational functions and incidents, and interpret them in terms of organisational practice. This will lead to a better understanding of the spirit of organisational practice and functions.

This kind of learning is with smaller units, not whole of organisation studies.

Therefore I need to reflect and write about:

- observations
- questions
- strategies
- improvements

Robert depicted this in a diagram. At the center is me and not an instrument - its my personal values, fears and lofty ideals. From this point of view, I will examine 3 dimensions:

- applied/organisation based projects, that I am working on
- propositional knowledge, from reading
- consciously develop thoughts, practices.

From this, there will be created a better understanding of all three dimensions - and will lead to propositions for improvement of 1 or all 3 areas.

It may be personal learning will be the model for organisational learning.

I came home from the residential and started the diary.
My reflections on the residential itself and what I learnt there, will probably be recorded somewhere in the diary.
APPENDIX 3

Extract from Diary: 25.4.95

Comments on Richard Bawden’s paper

During February, I read Richard Bawden’s (1994) paper on Developing Better Organisations and Communities: A Learning Systems Approach. Bawden, as others, suggests that a key competency for the future is systemic thinking. Also that multiple paradigms must exist and work together, and when one thinks systematically then one is able to work in all other paradigms.

Whether or not this is so, I don’t know. However, it seems to me that systemic thinking is a mystery for most of us within organisations. It’s a little like saying “act spiritually”. What does this really mean?

Even though I don’t know how one learns to think systematically, and what this really means (despite reading about it and trying to practice it), I can recognise a systemic thinker when I meet one. In a way it’s similar to recognising a truly compassionate person, an enlightened person, an intuitive person, a strategic thinker or a visionary. These all involve higher level competencies - and in my experience it is not possible to train people in these capabilities unless they already have the potential.

However, organisations need to be clever at identifying people with these capabilities and provide opportunities for them to expand and “fly”. Also, such people can affect other people in the organisation, and provide them with experiential learning about systemic thinking. How do we do this successfully for the good of the organisation and all the people in it?

Bawden also discusses competencies, and I am working on a national project which includes development of generic competencies for managers in the National Vocational and Education Training sector.

My belief about competencies is that you continuously expand peoples existing skills in depth, and only a little in breadth - unless they take full responsibility for their learning and are prepared to continuously question how they can improve.

I am convinced that many people learn a lot intellectually, but have great difficulty in implementing it in practice. They even believe and rationalise that their practice matches their intellectual beliefs - however, this is not so.

During work on a national project, and being influenced by Bawden’s paper, I redefined a concept that I had been playing with. This was how to define organisational learning:

The combination of personal and team knowledge, skills and attributes

66 See footnote 15 in Chapter 3, sub-section Using Systemic Ideas to Explore Organisational Learning, for reference in the thesis to this Diary extract.
which allow for differences; which demonstrate abilities in interacting with the environment; and which produce actions that improve critical processes and outcomes.

Paradigms - in Bawden’s paper, he also suggests that in Australia, most people work in the technocratic/accommodative paradigm. I most whole heartedly agree! In the large bureaucratic organisation that I work in, most people work at an operational, task focused level, being very busy all the time with paper. Their pragmatic approach and need to work on known tasks in ways that they are familiar with, causes them extreme frustration when demands are made for them to work in other ways - or with other paradigms. There seems to be great difficulty in organisations to combine creativity with practicality.

Bawden’s question captures my imagination - “Could it be that our slowness to adapt the organisational cultures in countries like Australia is a function of the prevalence of the technocratic/accommodative paradigm amongst the individual decision-makers in our society?” (page 51).

I believe that organisations need a subtle blend of creativity and practicality.

They also need a subtle blend of rationality and spirituality.

How do you do this, organisationally?

On page 52-53, Bawden poses a number of questions about critical learning systems. I would like to come back to these at some time.

My current reading at work continuously cover a range of topics such as organisational change, teams, strategic planning, management development, project planning, national training reform agenda, leadership, work based learning and learning organisations. Much of what I read suggests ways to transform, and practices and habits people need to develop.

Despite all this body of modern knowledge, as well as all the significant ancient knowledge, many of us do not change or change very slowly - as we try to live successfully in uncertain and complex organisations and environments.

Instead of focusing on how to help people change, change is usually imposed e.g. restructuring. I am convinced that if we replaced much of our training with personal development, our organisations would change their culture a lot quicker.

We try to change organisational culture without doing it with our hearts and feelings. We ask staff, but never really demonstrate the answer “what’s in it for me”.

People in large bureaucratic organisations are currently demotivated. We do not consider the “whole” person - we think that by changing skills we will change organisations.

We need to change levels of consciousness, and question models and words. I find it extremely frustrating that most things need to be expressed with models and words, which inaccurately or superficially describe how things really are. These linear, reductionist frameworks perhaps create certainty and comfort - but it only reflects our perceptions of how we would like things to be. What really lies beneath organisational models and words? What
are the deeper truths - are we able to comprehend these levels? Perhaps most of us never will - if we could, it would give power and control - perhaps dangerously.

Is it that we try to focus on what others should be doing - we blame them, they, parents, organisations, managers, staff. Should the focus be internal, on how we create and change within?

Therefore is it about choice and not about skills - why we choose to change, when and how? And is it necessary to theorise - or for people to just do it?

The issue might then be to focus more on support and mentoring within organisations. The issue is not to artificially create standards and expectations - but to accept that as long as all people are growing and learning, the universe is growing and learning. And not set artificial standards and performance indicators.

The focus may well need to be on how people develop and practice “being” - my focus is trying to be ego-less, non-judgmental, having no expectation and acting with humility. And, how do you do this in an organisation where there are expectations of outcomes and public requirements? It’s such a struggle trying to do this in our personal lives, let alone organisationally.

I’ve been rambling. I’ve lost the thread, and will stop.
APPENDIX 4

Extract from Diary: 13.2.97

Behaviours I’ve observed in reaction to restructuring

Well, another year and time to start writing. I’ve found it very difficult to get focused. I am writing about organisations, but we rarely acknowledge how our personal lives influence and effect our attitudes, motivation and outputs at work.

I have felt a lot of ups and downs in the last two months. Sometimes it is so difficult to make our own personal lives work that I am not at all amazed that relationships get rocky or don’t work within organisations.

What I have experienced is how an ‘innocent’ action of mine has been interpreted completely differently by another member of the family - enough to cause her great distress. This has shocked me so much, that I am having trouble coping with it. In fact I feel like ceasing all relationship with her. This kind of thing hasn’t happened to me for a long time.

I then ponder on organisations, and how all these hidden issues and distresses are there in the energy field - effecting how we all perform.

It also makes me think of this restructuring phenomenon that is going on in so many organisations, including mine. Last December we were told our Division was ‘deleted’. The first phase was shock, anger, disbelief (even though the writing had been on the wall for some time), general talk and support. Many rallied together and decided to fight for survival of the function of staff development within the organisation. Then the Christmas holidays started and many of us took leave. When we came back there was a period of resigned acceptance. Since then in the last month, the mood swings up and down - from anger to ‘flatness’ or little energy. For some people, productivity is way down. We are trying to keep staff occupied with projects they are interested in, and also in giving them lots of support through training, secondment or new work experience; and providing opportunities for people to talk through their issues, and to discuss why all these changes are happening. The Division will wind down in the next three to six months. An author has called this period between the old and the new, the ‘neutral zone’.

In coping with the work stress, my own distress has caused me to think again about all the hidden distress staff have - and how our organisations do not acknowledge this or have appropriate ways of handling it. The pain our organisations cause often outweighs the gain of organisational change. And since our organisations consist of us, it’s us doing this to ourselves!

At some stage I will address these issues, because our organisational theories often ignore them. Some call it ‘putting the love back into organisations’. Now that would be an interesting title for a theses.

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67 See footnote 23 in Chapter 5, section How Do We Feel? for reference in the thesis to this Diary extract.
APPENDIX 5

Extract from Diary: 21.5.95\(^{68}\)

Thoughts about diversity and differences

One of the most challenging things in organisations is to work with diversity. We unconsciously keep surrounding ourselves with “like minds”. It’s very pleasant and easy to work with. It’s when I work with people from other organisations or other units within my organisation that I realise how much diversity we keep out of our lives. It’s also when I go in taxis or other public situations, and start asking questions about what is important to people and their values, that I also realise how much diversity there is in Australia - and we can be quite oblivious to it at work.

It’s also interesting and a dilemma that when we are trying to work as change agents within organisations, we consciously employ staff who do not hinder, i.e. who can confidently forge ahead through the resistance within the organisation. Therefore the unit does not employ a range of people representing the range of people within the organisation. However, it does mean that with some thought and effort we can employ “like minds”, but also ensure a diversity of values and cultures within the unit. I stand corrected - it seems that when organisations want to forge ahead, they employ people with like values and attitudes, but perhaps from different cultures.

With these complexities, how do we handle diversity?

Two days ago I was again at vocational education and training sector meeting. It was interesting that during the discussion of the Karpin report (1995) on leadership and management skills, one of the members of the Karpin task force mentioned how difficult it was to get learning on the agenda within organisations. That Australian managers have no concept that learning is important to them. I was a little horrified that because of this, the word “learning” was replaced with the word “continuous improvement” for the person. This was to make the language acceptable.

I also observed around the table how most people are interested in the perception they create of themselves. Dare I say it, but especially males are good at “strutting their stuff”. They tell stories, make jokes, talk constantly of their contacts and the important things they are working on. People like to give an impression of “important” changes they are making within the organisation or within the nation.

I make some dreadful overgeneralisations!

Yet I observe how most people are not prepared to go out on a limb. The rhetoric is there about what we need in organisation, and the changes we need to make, yet when it comes to

\(^{68}\) See footnote 27 in Chapter 5, sub-section Ways of Changing, for reference in the thesis to this Diary extract.
tackling a group or causing waves in sensitive or high profile circles - that is, making these changes "live", I see people running for cover.

I think a big issue in our culture is that we frequently have an intellectual understanding of issues, but doing something about it or taking risks is another thing.

I considered what I was observing, as I have done so often before, and came to the conclusion how circumspect we sometimes need to be in groups. Especially if we want to continue feeling part of the group and being accepted. The complexity is in how to walk the fine line - between being true to yourself and working with integrity, and not giving into group think, and yet remaining accepted and talking the same language.

I think the different points I have discussed, which sometimes are contradictory, indicate the confusion I sometimes feel in life. How messy and fuzzy life can be. How difficult it sometimes can be to stay in touch with the "real" me. And how we need to understand the indicators within ourselves, that tell us when we are and are not being true to ourselves.

Sometimes I think much can be solved within organisations if we realise that when there is disagreement or it seems to be impossible to find the solution, it means that there is no one answer. That we need to take into account both points of view. I have often found people trying to find "the" solution, and when I point out the path that takes into account a number of their points of view, the problem is "solved". I can't quite understand why most people can't see this, and need to have it pointed out to them.

One of the questions we are not addressing in organisations is how we balance, and not discard the need for both:

- cascading management planning (tasks) against new science theories of "pattern of discovery" (processes and relationships). (Wheatley 1994: 9)
- holistic/systemic views and operations against segmented views and operations
- reality against perceptions
- values against practices
- learning organisation theories against operational focuses.
APPENDIX 6

Extract from Diary: 28.9.95

Not looking for solutions

I am not looking for solutions or a list of remedies - as best sellers and experts tend to do. I want to examine and think about key implications; and draw some conclusions if I am able to - for change, for people, for organisations. There usually are no answers - this is why we often feel so uncomfortable.

I want to explore the connections, the unquestioned assumptions, the burning issues as I see them. Perhaps speak about what’s unspeakable within organisations (if this is not being too presumptuous). I want to bring together what is often left separate - the experts tell us what we need to do and create; others tell us of organisational ills and disabilities; others give us the habits we need to develop as people within organisations - but they often don’t look at self and human nature in depth, and the relationship to organisational theory and practice. Or am I wrong in suggesting this? Anyway, I would like to explore all these areas.

Having listened to a session on ethics by Jane Goodall at the residential, I realise that my thesis is full of my reactions to my work experiences - and of course the diary gives me lots of examples to use. What happens if my writing gets read by some in TAFE and upsets them? Jane said that where there are questions about people, their views and lives, then we must go to the ethics committee. I guess this means that I’ll have to put an application into the committee at some stage - perhaps early next year? Maybe I won’t have to? I’ll look into it.

At some stage I would probably do a series of interviews; and perhaps visit some sights that have “exceptional” work and people practices. But on the other hand, so much has already been documented on exceptional people, exceptional work sites, and so much literature abounds on organisations and systems theory, I could probably explore my three main areas of interest and see what I come up with - then perhaps follow up with particular literature reviews - for and against.

69 See footnote 34 in Chapter 7, sub-section Participant/Observer Method, for reference in the thesis to this Diary extract.

M Staron 1999  A Personal Perspective on Organisations
APPENDIX 7

Extract from Diary: 28.5.95

Thoughts about change, speaking from the heart and self doubt

I haven’t felt like writing in the last few days.

At work I enjoy working with people - and when I have a few spare hours at my desk, I can’t bear to tidy up meaningless paper work. I meet with people instead and try to work through issues and future directions, or examine current blocks to projects.

It is interesting how people change. How do organisations cope with this? I suspect they don’t. It’s up to the individual to cope. I used to concentrate on tasks, and manage my time well in terms of the “paper” war. Over the last few years I have changed, and developed my self confidence and intuitiveness. I now find the “paper” in-tray very boring.

I have always enjoyed change. Now at work, the change is at a much faster pace, and lots of new initiatives need to be implemented simultaneously. Something has to give. As many before me have discovered, the old theories of time management and planning don’t work any more. In a way, we now have to work and plan simultaneously. Whereas a few years ago we planned first and then worked to that plan.

At work, this means a variety of people are at different places in their mindsets. It is a very tricky business for us all to work together happily and at high levels of productivity. The actual concept of productivity means different things to different people. Some need it structured and worked out on paper. Others value a fluid and process approach.

I’ve also noticed that most people don’t like going out on a limb. It’s important for them to work in the same paradigm as others, so that tension and possibility of conflict is reduced. It also means change happens slowly.

Recently I was at a national workshop, and we had three guest speakers. One spoke from the heart about her experiences and personal observations re a particular topic. The other two gave a typical presentation in an ordered impersonal manner. The one that captured my interest of course was the first one. Yet it was interesting to see that in question time, all the questions were directed to the latter two speakers. Why?

More and more as I develop my own views, as far as they can be called my own, and focus on idealistic ways and making leaps in new directions, the gaps increase between me and most others within the organisation. I am certainly not on my own in feeling this way - I do meet and work with some like souls, thankfully. But will I survive in this very bureaucratic organisation? Despite all the new literature about the ways we need to be and work in the future, not many actually understand the implications for themselves and the organisation; and

70 See footnote 43 in Chapter 8, sub-section Informing Organisational Learning Through Family/Personal Learning, for reference in the thesis to this Diary extract.
most certainly feel alienated and confused. They feel rejected and “used” by the organisation. If what they did for so many years was valued, why is it not okay any more? and give me enough good reasons why I should change. Being inward looking, and not seeing concrete examples of how the world is changing, they resist and sabotage any processes for change. Often they work to the bottom line, and don’t take the completely unknown new path.

Knowing there are new ways to do things, new demands on how we are to perform in the workplace, does not automatically change the workplace. I’ve observed that one of the hardest things for people to do in the workplace is to turn theory into action.

Most people don’t want to take in the message that many things have changed around them. That the window they are looking out of at the world now has a different view, and therefore requires different responses. Over time we get very hooked into our values and beliefs and actions, and don’t wish to change any of them.

Now moving on to another topic. I was recently partaking in a discussion about a national conference (which I had not attended) on industrial relations and competencies. Apparently there was a very heated debate about competencies, both enterprise and national, and their implementation. One of the invited guests (from the UK) for the conference made some concluding remarks, which included a statement that the Australian focus on competencies was keeping us in the past, and not helping us to prepare for the future. And that competencies were most appropriate for Australian Standards Framework levels 1-4 and not above. I wondered why people hang onto outmoded models which were very useful for their time, but not so appropriate now.

I am again asking myself what am I doing writing such a subjective lot of material. What out of it will be useful for the Masters? We all like to be told we are doing a “good job”. I try hard not to look for such ego fulfillment - but I suspect I am needing some now, and am ready to seek feedback on this work.

I now digress to where my thoughts have been for some time - thinking about spirituality and what it means to me. Having had a consciously strong focus on my spiritual development for the last six years, I now feel I don’t know what it means. I was originally driven by an extremely strong desire to seek truth, and to see things/actions for what they really were. As I followed this path, I became aware that I was learning about spiritual growth and development. This path meant, for me:

- seeking connection to universal wisdom
- trying to experience the interconnectedness between all living matter
- growing and learning to be a better human being
- feeling connected to higher levels of energy
- understanding philosophically some causes of human unhappiness, and as a consequence practising an awareness and control of ego driven behaviour, controlling my own expectations of others, and trying to be non-judgmental.

I also became very aware that any intellectual understandings I might have really means nothing. Its about practising these understandings and values, that matters.
It also seems to me that any gifts you have are there to be used, and for the benefit of others. That one’s ongoing spiritual growth depends on using new learnings for the benefit of others. Wisdom is not given/acquired solely for one’s own benefit.

It’s very easy to understand and know. And very hard to practice and experience.

I suppose this is why in organisations, rhetoric does not always match actions, and values do not always match practice.

I am starting to feel frustrated that I want to spend a lot of time reading foundation works; but at the same time I really enjoy exploring my understandings and reflections. As I am currently spending most time writing, I am not reading enough. What should I do?

Am I just naval gazing?

As you can see, I’m filled with doubts. About my abilities and about what I say. That everyone already knows it, and why should I repeat it? Why would anyone want to listen to me?

Most people seem so self assured, but I am sure they are also filled with doubts. What does this mean for executives in large organisations? They must have doubts. Most certainly are not prepared to admit it. It seems to be a sign of weakness in our culture. Have they lost touch with their own feelings and vulnerability’s?

Also staff often don’t want to see the doubts, the humanness. They want strong, infallible leaders, who are always right. Also, I guess, some people are public people, and others are quiet background people.

Who gets promoted in organisations? Is it the one with most merit? Or the one who confidently knows how to create the “right” public perception? No matter how well we try to select, and make our procedures objective, no organisation ever gets it completely right? Why? This would be worthy of a thesis in itself.
APPENDIX 8

Extract from Diary: 23.5.96 – 25.5.96

Developing models for the thesis

I haven’t written for a while partly because I had nothing new to say; partly because I still felt “stuck” and couldn’t bring myself to continue reading methodology or tackle the huge list of books to read that people have mentioned are relevant to my thesis; and partly because I ruptured a muscle in my leg (playing tennis - exercise is a dangerous thing!) and didn’t feel like doing a thing.

Tonight I feel like writing and I’ll see where it takes me.

Today a work colleague rang me and said she had co-facilitated a day on strategic planning with a Total Quality Management practitioner who used all the quality tools and techniques. My work colleague gave a framework for the tools by using a model I had developed for planning which had a theoretical base - and the participants loved it. She said I should publish it! I feel that in itself, such things are not publishable - a lot more would have to be developed. What this made me think about was how I often give people models to work from - I can often conceptualise thoughts and help put opposing views into perspective and thereby help people reach agreement. I raise this as I wonder how to use this in the thesis.

Another example of what I am talking about - I recently devised a model to help people discuss facilitation and teaching - everyone is always arguing about how ‘we teach’ or ‘no, it’s facilitation’ or ‘what is it, teaching or facilitation?’ The model aimed to minimise such arguments about terminology and refocus the discussion onto the processes. It went something like this: - oh dear, pity I have forgotten - the materials are at work. I’ll reproduce it later.

Tonight I had a teleconference with the Australian Capability Network Committee, of which I am a member. I raised the issue that people want to not only know about the philosophy and concept of “capability”, but also about the implementation. We agreed to meet and pool our knowledge and experience and work out issues to do with implementation.

I have referred to John Stevenson’s work early on in the diary because his way of developing people so impressed me - and his concept of “capability” is far more meaningful to me than competencies.

Following the teleconference, I started thinking about the various concepts that I have become interested in, or the dilemmas and contradictions we face at work - and how this relates to “capability”. I wondered how it might all make sense conceptually. I then started playing around with some models.

24.5.96

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71 See footnote 58 in Chapter 10, sub-section A New Context for Organisational Theory, for reference in the thesis to this Diary extract.
I woke up this morning with a feeling of great excitement. I started working on models and came up with something - which I think puts together most of what I have been working on in my research and at work. I am wondering if it is the basis of this thesis - and gives me a framework - from which I can explore all the interrelated parts.

The Complexity of Organisations

Why this model is important to me:

- it gives me the "whole" picture of what we have to grapple with at work - its based on practical experience within a large bureaucratic organisation
- it's the way I am trying to give myself some reality and context to organisational/management theories and "best sellers" that focus usually on one aspect such as chaos theory, systems theory or effective habits of managers - of course I don't deny the need and importance of these - I suspect I am looking more at breadth than depth and how things actually work.
- it helps me understand my own personal and work experience - as over the years I have moved from a more practical operational base within an organisation, to looking at the conceptual and theoretical basis.
- it simply helps me put my knowledge and experience "together" - and to make sense of the different roles I have to undertake within organisations, and the different settings that I have to work in, within organisations.
• the model tries to put together the complexity that we face in organisations and why we
find organisational life so difficult - as we are usually operating in one of the “boxes”,
while all the other things are going on simultaneously.

25.5.96

I then sat down and wondered how to present the model and thought I had better write
something. After I wrote and presented the model, I then had all these doubts:

• does it really cover the complexity of organisations or only one aspect of it such as
organisational development?
• what really should go under each of the columns? - so I played around with it and changed
it a bit - to try and get some of the operational aspects of organisations in, such as
“management”, and also the notion of sustainability.
• how do you do a thesis? - my writing is not very formal and will that be okay, because I
actually would like to write in a way that is comfortable for me and more understandable
to people within organisations than academics - kind of build a bridge between the two. I
also need guidance on techniques such as quotes etc. I know I will need to do a lot of
checking of my grammar and spelling. I’ll probably write first and enjoy the flow as it
comes, and later worry about all the details.
• of course, looking back at the model it looks all very ordinary and should I use it?

I have decided to start the document separate to this diary as I feel it is the beginning of what
will eventually become the thesis. I am finally focused on the thesis.

I think my next step is to now review my diary and categorise what’s in it. I will then do an
outline for the contents, which will start to guide my writing and reading.

I will continue to use the diary for reflection when I feel the need and to record what I read,
quotes etc.
REFERENCES CITED


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M Staron 1999  *A Personal Perspective on Organisations*


A

Personal Perspective
On Organisations:
Head, Heart and Soul

Maret Avelyn Staron
B.A., Dip. Ed.

Research Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Science (Honours)
Faculty of Social Inquiry
Social Ecology Research Group

University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury
Richmond, NSW, Australia

1999
PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning this thesis,

and the best possible result has been obtained.
Dedicated to my niece Bronwyn Kemp

So beautiful and so brave
In so much pain but with so much hope

Her family will always mourn her
An ache and a space that cannot be filled

Why must there be so much pain and so many tears?
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis has been possible because of the interest and dedication that my supervisors, Judy Pinn, School of Social Ecology, University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury, and Dr Ian Mills, from Melbourne, have shown towards me as a student and learner. Their feedback and ideas have helped shape this thesis. I also thank Dr Robert Woog, School of Social Ecology, University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury and Professor Patrick Duignan, Foundation Professor of Educational Leadership, Australian Catholic University, who gave so generously of their time and ideas, particularly in the initial part of my research.

Many of the ideas and insights in this thesis were formed during or following conversations with others. I sincerely thank so many for their generosity with their time and thoughts, particularly my work colleagues from whom I learnt so much. I've been unable to acknowledge all these people within the thesis as their ideas are intertwined with mine and it would be too difficult to identify who said what. The conversations helped to clarify my thoughts and support my search for a deeper understanding of organisational life.

A special group was my Research Learning Group. The membership changed over the years, but I would like to acknowledge Cecily Moreton, Patrice Thomas, Michelle Webster, Ian Mills and Yelena Udy. They helped me find my writing-voice.

I must also thank my partner Jonas Zvirblis and my children for their wonderful support. I also thank all those who have guided me along my own spiritual path.

Is any writing original?
Are these my own thoughts and ideas?

I don't think so
They came from being with others

From sharing experiences together
From observing and trying to understand the differences

Perhaps all that I can do is use my own words
To express what so many of us feel and know.
DECLARATION

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

M. Staron
ABSTRACT

I commenced my research studying paradigms in organisations, as I believed this would help me find ways of improving organisational life. However, my research soon broadened out to include a much wider range of areas and it became a study of ‘thinking, doing, being organisations’. Through a heuristics approach, I began an exploration of the meaning, both intellectually and emotionally, of my experiences in organisations.

I focused on change and learning and how continual rounds of restructuring impacted on me, as a participant/observer. Systems concepts helped me understand behaviours in organisations and I soon found myself exploring the invisible and unknown. The lack of spirituality in organisations, how we hide our hearts and souls and how we seek certainty using static models, theories and plans became underlying themes throughout the research.

I chose the diary method to record these experiences and I analysed, reflected and gained intuitive insights through this method. My research is as much about my subject area, as about describing the process that I went through. The findings of my research include outputs such as the development of an organisational model of complexity, but more so outcomes that were the intuitive insights that I gained during the research process. I gained some closure, but my research remains open as the more I learn and research, the more there is to question and understand.
## CONTENTS

**Chapter 1  Introduction: finding my way**  
The thesis, it’s proposition and questions  
Approach and methodology  
Research findings  
Positioning myself  
Writing the thesis  

**Chapter 2  Clarifying My Starting Point: thinking, doing, being organisations**  
Paradigms – the solution?  
There must be more to it than this  
Further connections and linkages needed to be made  
Confusion and lack of congruence  

**Chapter 3  Self As Centre: freeing ourselves to learn**  
My diary  
What is my research really about?  
Using systems ideas to explore organisational learning  
The need for space to simply learn and grow  
Few forums for learning  
Was it to be individual or organisational learning?  
Being comes before doing  

**Chapter 4  A Reflection on the Nature of Organisations: interconnections and perturbations**  
Biological metaphors for organisations  
Organisations as holons  
Systems paradigms  
Purpose and consciousness  
Dreaming our organisations  

**Chapter 5  Aspects of Change: Illusions, feelings, and unpredicatablity**  
The illusion of organisations  
The need for dialogue and ‘real talking’  
Focusing on structures and not people  
How do we feel?  
Imposing change  
Invisible and unspoken  
Ways of changing  

**Chapter 6  Spirituality: perceptions and understanding**  
A very personal thing  
What is spirituality within organisations?  
Spiritual practices in organisations  
The need for interconnectedness  
Why can’t we see what we are doing wrong?  
But what do I really want to research and understand?  

M Staron 1999  A Personal Perspective on Organisations
Chapter 7  Research Approach: matching research methodologies to organisational experiences

Research paradigms  118
Key aspects of my methodology  119
Qualitative research approach  121
A feminist perspective  122
Heuristic approach  127
Human inquiry  130
Participant/observer method  132
Fuzzy logic  138
Diary writing  143
Grounded theory methodology  146
Validity and reliability  149
Evolving processes  153

Chapter 8  Organisational Behaviours: love, listening and spirituality

We need to change some of our most fundamental behaviours in organisations  155
Why can’t we listen to each other?  158
Moving away from industrial revolution practices  159
Organisations need self esteem and love  162
We often need to confront or criticise  165
Tell us what’s really happening  165
We may need to search in new places  166
Informing organisational learning through family/personal learning  169
Questioning our assumptions  171
What can we rely on when nothing stays the same?  173
Power issues are central to organisations  174
How do we remain calm and peaceful in the midst of chaos and confusion?  177
The need for control and attention  181

Chapter 9  Organisational Movement: creating space for health, human nature and democracy

Culture and learning  184
Support and democracy in organisations  186
Developing healthy organisations  189
What could be?  192
It’s becoming clearer – I think!  194
Changing my approach to work  196
Do we take into account human nature?  198
Belonging  199

Chapter 10  Redefining Organisations: questioning assumptions and models

A new context for organisational theory  203
Why these models?  204
Assumptions  205
The models  206
Creating capability  213
New paradigms for change  215
Still focusing on tools and techniques  216
Defining organisations  220
The need for guiding principles  222
Can we move beyond paradigms?  223
Chapter 11  Epilogue: can I live what I believe?
What emerged out of my research?  
Where to from here?  
The need for continual movement and non-linearity  
Retaining the invisible and unspoken in organisations  

References Cited  

Bibliography  

Appendices  
Appendix 1:  Extract from Diary 12.4.95 (Meeting with Judy Pinn)  
Appendix 2:  Extract from Diary 22.4.95 (Meeting with Robert Woog)  
Appendix 3:  Extract from Diary 25.4.95 (Comments on Richard Bawden's paper)  
Appendix 4:  Extract from Diary 13.2.97 (Behaviours I've observed in reaction to restructuring)  
Appendix 5:  Extract from Diary 21.5.95 (Thoughts about diversity and differences)  
Appendix 6:  Extract from Diary 28.9.95 (Not looking for solutions)  
Appendix 7:  Extract from Diary 28.5.95 (Thoughts about change, speaking from the heart and self doubt)  
Appendix 8:  Extract from Diary 23.5.96 (Developing models for the thesis)  

Figures  
Figure 1:  Research framework  
Figure 2:  Holonocentric methodology  
Figure 3:  Placing myself in the centre of my research  
Figure 4:  Blending creativity and practicality, rationality and spirituality  
Figure 5:  Iceberg model  
Figure 6:  Key aspects of my methodology  
Figure 7:  Participant/observer method - reaching closure  
Figure 8:  Participant/observer method - ongoing cycle  
Figure 9:  Events within organisations  

Models  
Model 1:  Our organisational world  
Model 2:  Complexity of individual impact on organisations and of organisations on individuals